

John Harvey 1794.

AN
ELUCIDATION
OF THE
UNITY OF GOD,
DEDUCED FROM
SCRIPTURE AND REASON.

ADDRESSED TO
CHRISTIANS of all DENOMINATIONS.

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Matt. xv. 9.

FOURTH EDITION, IMPROVED AND ENLARGED.

TO WHICH IS SUBJOINED,

Gifford, James

A LETTER
FROM THE AUTHOR,

TO HIS GRACE

The ARCHBISHOP of CANTERBURY.

SECOND EDITION WITH ADDITIONS,

L O N D O N.

PRINTED FOR G. AND T. WILKIE, IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH
YARD. MDCCLXXXVI.

S.C.R.

BT

314

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1786

Regula quidem fidei una omnino est, sola, immobilis,
et irreformabilis, credendi scilicet in unicum Deum,
omnipotentem, mundi conditorem, et filium ejus
Jesum Christum, natum ex Virgine Maria, &c.—
Tertullian de Virginibus Velandis.

TO THE SOCIETY
OF
UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS,
AT MONTROSE, IN NORTH BRITAIN,

THIS TRACT IS VERY RESPECTFULLY
DEDICATED:

WHEREIN, IT IS HUMBLY HOPED,
IS CLEARLY SHEWN,
THAT, THE GREAT PRINCIPLE ON WHICH
THEY ACT, NAMELY,

THE WORSHIP OF THE ONE TRUE GOD

THE FATHER ONLY,

IN THE NAME AND AS THE DISCIPLES OF

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,

IS STRICTLY CONSONANT TO THE PRECEPTS OF

DIVINE REVELATION.

Girton, Cambridgeshire,
July 25, 1784.

JAMES GIFFORD.

THE Great Articles which we have endeavoured to prove directly and unexceptionably, are these.

That, The Father Almighty is SUPREME, and the only proper Object of Religious Worship:—from the clearest declarations of our Saviour, the Prophets, and Apostles.

That, There is the strongest reason to believe, from the Evidence produced, that, by the holy Ghost, the inspired writers mean the Divine Influence, Power, or the spiritual Gifts of God, even the Father himself.—That, however, supposing the holy Spirit to be a Person, and different from the Father; we find no Command or Precedent whatsoever, in the Sacred Records, for the offering any distinct Worship or Glory to the holy Spirit.

That, Christ expressly acknowledged himself INFERIOR to the Father: that the Circumstances recorded by his Apostles, of his Life, Death, Resurrection, and Exaltation, manifest him to be so: and that we are most plainly directed, in the holy Scriptures, to offer Divine Worship to God, the Father, only, in the Name, and as the Disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All points of less moment are left at large in this Tract.

P R E F A C E.

THE Author, in first attempting to elucidate the *Unity of the Deity*, had no other than an anxious desire of coming at *Truth*, and satisfying himself: and in the resolution since of Publishing the result, sincerely professes that he has not the most distant intention of fomenting divisions amongst his Christian Brethren*, but, on the contrary, is solicitous to promote their inward Peace, and to forward the right understanding of the holy Scriptures. *Not handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the Truth commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God*†. For which purpose, he has endeavoured

* The *Maxim* that we ought not to expose our Religious Opinions to the World, however just they may be, *if repugnant to those which Prevail*, (lest we should thereby officiously disturb the Consciences of others, and perhaps endanger the tranquillity of our Country;) *is certainly false*; for on this Principle neither the *Reformation*, nor the original promulgation of the *Gospel* itself, can possibly be justified.

† 2 Cor. iv. 2.

voured to point out, plainly and concisely, the pure tenets of *primitive Christianity*, as they were delivered by its heavenly Author and his Apostles on this most important Subject; and to free *their Doctrines* from an unnatural mixture of *Gentile Philosophy*; from the distracting remains of ancient Bigotry and Superstition, the gloomy springs of that Charge of *inconsistency* and *contradiction* which has been so often and so profanely cast upon them.

By an impartial inspection into *Scripture*, it will be found, that the *absolute Unity* of the Deity is clearly shown in that unsullied Fountain;—that it must be our own prejudices which distort our view of this glorious and momentous *Truth*;—that our blessed Saviour expressly taught it, and never assumed *Divine Worship* to *himself*, nor left it in command that *he* should receive such after his departure hence; but instructed Mankind (most justly) to believe in him and his Precepts, as the sacred and anointed *Messenger* of the Most High, the *Son* of God, as he is emphatically named in the Scriptures *. And his Apostles, we find, firmly

* The Angel, in St. Luke, says “ he shall be called the Son of God.” Luke i. 35. Which expression seems to intimate that the *Title* should be understood in a *qualified* sense; i. e. not implying any *equality* with God.

The terms, *Gods*, *Sons of God*, *Children of God*, &c. so frequently found in Scripture, are, in general, figurative, or comparative,

firmly accord with him; asserting, with the utmost precision and simplicity, *as the knowledge of the Truth, that There is One God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.* 1 Tim. ii. 4, 5.

Convinced that these Principles form the basis of the Gospel, the writer has endeavoured in all humility to vindicate those sacred Doctrines, which declare, that Religious honours and Worship are due to Almighty God *alone*, the Great Parent of All! *in whom we live, and move, and have our*
A 2 *Being;*

parative, and, of course, will not admit of a literal construction, as may be observed in Exodus vii. 1. Matt. xxiii. 9. Luke vi. 35. John x. 34, 35. Acts xvii. 29. 1 Cor. viii. 5. 2 Cor. vi. 18, &c. Our blessed Master, in his present Exalted State, may, indeed, be called a *God*, or *Lord*, in that *Inferior* or *Subordinate* sense in which such Titles are sometimes applied, even to other highly Dignified Characters, in Scripture, as in John x. 35. But the appellation; thus properly taken, conveys no Idea of any *Equality* with *the Father of All*, Who is, in great truth, *the Supreme Lord of lords*, and *also God of gods*; and as such, most certainly, would our Saviour have his *Father* considered. In *what sense* or *degree*, such modal Titles, as those referred to above, may be applicable to our Redeemer (ever sincerely acknowledging *his very great and distinguished Pre-eminence*,) every man will, most probably, chuse to judge for himself.

Thus much may be further observed, that the Angel evidently grounds our Saviour's Title (*Son of God*) on his *miraculous Conception*, and the great Dignity and Importance of the Spiritual Office which God was pleased afterwards to confer upon him; as may be seen in Luke i. 30—35.

Being ; and upon whom only, the Preservation, Comfort, Peace and Happiness of the whole Universe eternally depend. Unto Him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all Ages world without end. Amen. Eph. iii. 21.

The Reader will find the many Scriptural Texts which are referred to, (*and upon which we are to depend*) by no means strained, *as is too common*, to support a favourite Hypothesis; but naturally and directly applied, fully in point, and, taken collectively, it is hoped, they will have their due effect on every unprejudiced Mind. For surely it will be thought altogether incredible that, *so great a cloud of witnesses* should be found in our holy records, evidently and repeatedly enforcing an express Article of Faith, important to the World in the highest degree, which after all (if we are to believe the generality of our present Teachers) falls short of the Truth !

The Author is fully as desirous of *receiving* light, as of trying to communicate it: if, therefore, any *material* Errors should be discovered in this Tract, he sincerely wishes, for his own safety, and the satisfaction of others, that they may be detected and exposed without ceremony *. (*excepting, however,*

* Num fingo? num mentior? cupio refelli. Quid enim laboro, nisi ut Veritas in omni quaestione illustretur. Cic. Quæst. 3. 20.

ever, against all Cavil and Subterfuge *). If, on the contrary, it appears, in general, to contain *Truth*, he hopes, for the Prosperity of our sacred Religion, and the Peace of Mankind, it will be somewhat attended to.

The Writer is but slightly acquainted with controversial Divinity. He has had but little time for such studies, a considerable part of his Life having been spent in the Service. The candid will, therefore, readily make allowances. The deductions here offered, are chiefly made, as will be seen, from the *Bible*.

Whatever defects may be found in the endeavour, the End sincerely aimed at, is, to fix *from the sacred Oracles*, (the only allowed substantial grounds of faith and worship) our religious regards on that *First Object* in whom all our hopes of present and future happiness must ultimately centre:—to incline, if possible, our Ecclesiastic Rulers to unite in such a *further* Amendment of
our

* The opposing arbitrarily one or two (perhaps obscure) passages against the universal tenour of the Scriptures, is an invidious method of preventing them from being reconciled either to themselves or to reason. In those voluminous writings there are doubtless *some things hard to be understood*; but their *general* meaning is, surely, the Standard that should be principally attended to; and the figurative and *ornamental* mode of expression, common to the Oriental languages, should be always remembered.

our public Forms, as, in their Wisdom, they may think will reduce them to a more sensible conformity to the *Scriptures*; and prevent by that happy means a numerous and growing body of conscientious Christians from being driven at length from the Church:—a melancholy alternative!

The following just observation of a late distinguished Theologist * may not be improperly introduced here: “ That the many errors and corruptions “ which crept into the Church even in the “ very early Ages, are a standing proof and admonition to all the later Ages, that there is no way of “ preserving a purity of *Faith* and *Worship* in any “ Church, but by reviewing them from time to “ time, and reducing them to the original test and “ *standard of the holy Scriptures.*”

This opinion is by no means peculiar. The excellent *Dr. Jortin* whose unaffected modesty, natural to his great Abilities, inclined him to touch with the gentlest hand the defects which he saw and lamented: In the *Preface* to his learned *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, observes, “ that “ *the Defenders of Revelation have often found themselves under a Necessity of reducing things to the “ venerable Christianity of the New Testament, and*
“ of

* Dr. Middleton, Introduction to his Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers of the Church, &c. Page 113.

“ of adventuring no farther ;” a method of defence which, from its singular success, at once exposes the folly and the presumption of relying on those adventitious Refinements “ which the Understanding can hardly lay hold of,” and which have been injudiciously and unnecessarily superadded to pure Christianity, as conducive to its Dignity and Security. Some of those Refinements and Additions have, indeed, in many instances on record, “ helped to fill the Church with Nominal Catholics, and to keep up an unity of exoteric faith in the bond of ignorance, fear, and hypocrisy*.”

* It has been imagined (surely without due reflection) that any further *Reformation* in our mode of Worship, though ever so just in Principle, would weaken the foundations of our sacred Religion †, be productive of a general Scepticism, and, as inferior considerations, degrade the Authority, and invidiously injure the rights and immunities of our established *Clergy*.—But such suspicions, it is humbly conceived, have no solid grounds; for it is certain, that the nearer Their Doctrines approach to the pure precepts of the Gospel; the freer they are from unintelligible mysteries, and the burden of contradictory opinions; the more likely they will be to take root, to spread, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance..

As to the danger of the Clergy themselves, it will of course, on a little consideration, appear visionary. Their consequence and value, it is presumed, depend, and ought to depend, on their strict adherence to the *Scriptures*, and not on their attachment

† The gates of hell shall not prevail against it ! The Religion of Truth can no more be shaken than Truth itself.

ment to the vain Systems and formularies of Men. And beyond all doubt, the necessity of their *Eſtabliſhment* will be, at least, as great when our received doctrines are purged from their remaining corruptions, as it is at this moment, or was at the *Reformation*. Relieved from the usual subjects of controversy, they would happily be enabled to pursue their duty with much less embarrassment; and would assuredly be placed on a firmer basis than ever,—by becoming the guardians and promulgators of a form of Worship highly endeared to the World by its Clearness and Purity; strongly enforced by its entire consonancy to Truth and Reason; and unshaken from having its *Sole* foundation in the Scriptures.

Sept. 14, 1782.

INTRO.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS treatise was first published under a somewhat different title*. The approbation it received has occasioned the subsequent Editions, with additions, which have naturally increased from an unremitted attention to the subject. The author conceives that the apposite selection of those sacred texts throughout the work, which so directly confirm the important point he means to enforce, has principally given rise to the encouragement he has experienced. The Reader is therefore requested not to think it too much trouble to apply those texts to the arguments proposed, as he may see occasion:—such a task, it is rather judged, will be pleasing, as doubtless it cannot be supposed, without offence, that any rational Being is really indifferent whether his Religious Principles are founded in Truth or not.

Our

* *Reflections on the Unity of God, as it accords with the received doctrine of the Trinity, &c.* The present title is thought more suitable to the Subject.

x INTRODUCTION.

Our Superior Faculties were assuredly not given to remain Idle; since it is by them only that we arrive at the knowledge of a *God*, and are enabled to contemplate His glorious Productions: it is by them only that we discover the intrinsic Beauty, feel the awful Precepts, and comprehend the unequalled Advantages of our Divine Religion:—a fair exertion of those Faculties is therefore certainly expected; and we must be *answerable* for either the wilful misuse, or the neglect of them.

Nevertheless it has been, and still is, the practice of Authors of no mean account, from Tertullian down to our most modern Professors, to declaim, on certain emergencies, against any appeal to the Understanding, or reliance upon it, in matters of the deepest concern*. The Favourers of this Doctrine, (which has been the Nurse of Ignorance) in regard to their own Modesty, should not vilify *Reason*, and insidiously attempt to court her assistance at the same time. However, such incivilities are common, and we find them recommended

* Nobis curiositate non opus est post Jesum Christum, nec inquisitione post Evangelium: cum credimus, nihil desideramus ultra credere. Tertull. de Præscript. Hæret. § 8. Which is thus rendered in *Middleton*, Inquiry, P. 226. "the true disciples of Christ, have nothing more to do with curiosity or inquiry, but when they are once become believers, their sole business is to believe on." We may here, as on some other occasions, admire the Zeal of the Fathers, without implicitly submitting to their Opinions.

I N T R O D U C T I O N. xi

mended by the combined Examples of some of the Friends, and some of the Adversaries of Christianity.

“ This ingenious and unaccountable Author,
 “ (*Bayle*) had frequent quarrels with *Reason*,
 “ which at last ran so high, that he gave her
 “ a Bill of Divorce, and turned her out of doors,
 “ with, *Res tuas tibi habeto*. And yet, when he
 “ had discarded her, he would reason against her,
 “ That is,

Nec tecum possum vivere, nec sine te :

“ An absurdity, which sticks, like the shirt of
 “ Hercules, to all those, of all denominations,
 “ who argue against *Reason*, as against a false and
 “ fallacious guide.” *Jortin's Rem. on Eccles.*
Hist. vol. i. p. 135, 136. Edit. 1751.

It is humbly hoped, that this piece contains, so far as the subject reaches, a just exposition and Defence of *genuine* Christianity, *on its own grounds*; although, it is very possible, some may invidiously, or too hastily, imagine it is calculated to undermine those inestimable doctrines. To such it is recommended to dismiss their prejudices and their suspicions for a moment, that the Mind may be free, and enabled to reflect calmly on what is advanced herein. They may be assured that the author has the real interest of the Christian Cause as much at heart as they can possibly have themselves.

The

xii INTRODUCTION.

The passages in Scripture which *seem* to cloud the *divine Unity*, and to favour the received opinions of the *distinct* deity of the holy Spirit, and also the equal Godhead of our Saviour, are, *comparatively*, remarkably *few*: and even of these, several are highly *figurative*, and require much explication*; some are improperly translated, and others are at length found to be *interpolations*. At any rate, it surely appears to be extremely dangerous and presumptuous to allow those few obscure and indeterminate passages, to outweigh the plain and *general* testimony of the sacred Writings, which, in so many instances, proclaim the *absolute Unity* of the ALMIGHTY, in the most distinct and positive terms; making it the very basis of our Religion; and referring us directly to Him as the Holy Object of our reverential fear, and the exhaustless source of every permanent Blessing.

How far therefore the Adoption of Religious tenets, as fundamentals, which have no sufficient authority from the Bible, may obstruct the propagation of the Gospel:—how far it may disturb the tranquillity, and diminish the happiness of the Christian World, (even beyond our present state of

* Happily for the Public, and for every serious Christian in particular, many of those abstruse texts have been explained by the late learned Dr. S. Clarke, Dr. Lardner, and since by Dr. Priestley, Mr. Lindsey, by a Writer who names himself *Pbilætes*, by Mr. Wm. *Christie*, and some others, with great clearness and ability.

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of existence) is an inquiry worthy of the most serious attention.

Let us remember that, *God is not the Author of Confusion, but of Peace**. An extravagant and rooted *fondness of Mystery*, especially in religious tenets, prevailed anciently in an extraordinary manner, even amongst the most eminent advocates of Christianity, as is conspicuous enough in their Writings; and to this hour it is evident that the same infatuation in some degree possesses us; insomuch that we are often unwilling, or afraid to trust plain sense and reason in our researches into Scripture, notwithstanding we are directed in those very Scriptures to employ our Judgment; *to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.* 1 Thess. v. 21. See Luke xii. 57. 1 Pet. iii. 15.

Abstracted from the more difficult, or *figurative* passages, (suffer it to be repeated) the Scripture declarations of the *Unity* of God, are full, clear, and express. Let us, therefore, abide by this pure Light which is so graciously shed upon us, and which so benevolently unites with that inferior gift of God, *our Reason*†.

If

* 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

† MEN may be very blameable for not admitting the *Unity*,
 " though it be supposed that they have only *moral Presumption*,
 " or *traditional Proofs* of it; because the *greater Probability*
 " ought

xiv INTRODUCTION.

If this treatise should happily lead to the further discovery of *Truth*; if it should, in any measure, be productive of *that Peace which passeth all understanding*, and which infinitely supercedes all Earthly enjoyments whatsoever;—the praise be to God, from whose kind Dispensations every true light ariseth.—May the advantages be reaped, in the fullest sense, by every pious Christian, as well as by the humble Instrument, who, deeply sensible of the awful Subject he is engaged in, has endeavoured, in strict conformity to the Precepts of Revelation, to assert the exclusive right of our omnipotent and benevolent CREATOR, to every possible testimony of our *Highest* Gratitude, Love, Obedience, and Praise.

“ought to determine their Judgment, and because it is unquestionable Matter of Duty, in *dubious Cases*, to take the *safer Side*.” If this be sound reasoning, (applied by the Author, more particularly, to the *Heathen* of old) the *Safer Side* for *Us* to take, seems to be this;—to compare the *Scripture* declarations *for* and *against* the proper *Unity of God*, and yield to the *Strongest* and *Clearest* Evidence. On which side this is likely to fall, it is hoped, will appear, with accumulated force, in the following sheets. The passage just quoted is, however, from a Writer (*supposed* Dr. Waterland) who was a strenuous Advocate for the *Athanasian Doctrine*.—See *Dissertation* added to *Bishop Law’s enquiry into the Ideas of Space, Time, &c.* P. 76.

POST-

P O S T S C R I P T.

THE Unitarians of the last and present Century, have been, by the contemptible Zeal of some of their Adversaries, compared to, or associated with Mahometans. In this *contrivance* there appears much of a spirit of impotent Malice, and but little Judgment *. Instead of conveying a Reproach, the Comparison, *so far as it regards the Divine Unity*, (and it can apply no further) confers a permanent Honour. This consequence Calumny itself dares not deny. It is a standing Rule with Unitarians, (it is hoped with all of them) to coalesce with Truth *Wherever* they find it, or think they find it. And where would be the harm if this Principle were more widely diffused? The Nature of Truth is not altered by the Subject in whom it is manifest. The genuine lustre of the Diamond is not diminished, nor its value

* What have the false pretensions and delusions of Mahomet, to do with his maintaining the *Divine Unity*?—an article which he had discernment enough to borrow from the *Scriptures*.

The *present* Unitarian Doctrine is coeval with Christianity, and is not only incompatible with *Arianism*, but also differs, in several respects, from the *Socinian* tenets: It is drawn from the *plain* and *general* evidence of the *Bible*, without any dependence on Metaphysical disquisitions, or confinement to the Opinions of any (uninspired) men *whatsoever*.

value lessened by the impurity of the Soil wherein we may find it. *Nor is there any fear that a Truth discovered in a Mahometan, will destroy, or contradict any Truth found in a Christian.* An Author whom we have already quoted, has illustrated this axiom in elegant language. "I look upon
 "the discovery of any thing which is true, as
 "a valuable acquisition to society; which cannot
 "possibly hurt, or obstruct the good effect of any
 "other Truth whatsoever: *for they all partake of*
 "*one common essence, and necessarily coincide with*
 "*each other; and like the drops of rain, which fall*
 "*separately into the river, mix themselves at once*
 "*with the stream, and strengthen the general cur-*
 "*rent*.*"

* Dr. Middleton's Preface to his free Inquiry, &c. P. vii.

AN
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UNITY OF GOD,
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ADDRESSED TO
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*The Lord Reigneth ; let the Earth rejoice : let the
multitude of Isles be glad thereof. Ps. xcvi. 1.*

*Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the
earth : for I am God ; and there is none else,
Isaiah xlv. 22.*

IT has been long a most affecting consideration,
with all those who are seriously and Reli-
giously disposed, that Mankind, and even the
several sects of Christians, should still be so
greatly divided in those Principles which regard
the *Proper Object* of Adoration, and the most ac-
ceptable and orthodox mode of discharging the

B

sacred

sacred Duty of Divine Worship. The Mind of Man is distracted by the various Opinions that have prevailed, and do yet prevail; and intimidated by the positive manner in which some of them have been insisted on, according to the several Ideas, and imaginary Interests of different Writers. This disunion, in the very ground-work of our Faith, has done unspeakable injury to our holy religion.

The long controverted Creed of St. Athanasius, which asserts a *Trinity* in Unity, has been, in a great measure, we apprehend, the occasion (however unintended) of pernicious dissensions amongst Christians; and indeed, any attempt to destroy the *strict* Unity of the Deity, must ever involve us in confusion, and shake the peace of Mankind.

It is designed, therefore, in this publication, to manifest the truth and consistency of the Bible on an Article of infinite concern;—to recover the Harmony, on a Principle of heavenly origin, which has been disturbed here below, chiefly by an unhappy experiment, in an early period, to accommodate the simplicity of the sacred Doctrines to the abstruse Speculations of an ancient Philosophy. We shall endeavour to pursue the most easy and direct methods, as the most conducive to the end proposed. The fairest prospect

pect of increasing that Faith which overcometh the world, is, in our efforts to remove, and not to establish, the Difficulties which appear to have been obtruded upon the Gospel : And it is a great happiness that our Creator has not left men under the necessity of employing any very deep or subtile arguments in support of a subject, on which to be in darkness is to be completely miserable. The virtuous mind, fearful of error, and anxious to be firmly grounded in truths the most valuable ; is too often precluded from every hope of satisfaction, by a dejecting and final appeal to *Mystery* ; a resource which (as it is still managed) seems to be calculated for those only, who are willing to lay Reason and Religion asleep together.*

The *Rational faculties* were certainly given to Man, not to mislead him, but to direct his Judgment, and regulate his Ideas in the search of Truth. It is in vain, therefore, to depreciate this Heavenly gift. When we are taught that we are bound “to believe faithfully,” † Position’s
 B 2 which

* For the true meaning of the word *Mystery*, in the New Testament ; see Mr. *Christie’s Discourses on the Divine Unity*. P. 54. 241, 242. The Mysteries which men have so much insisted on, appear chiefly to be Mysteries of human Invention. See Rom. xvi. 25, 26. Col. i. 26, 27.

† “To say a man is bound to believe, is neither truth nor sense.”—*Dean Swift’s Thoughts on Religion*, Works, vol. xvi. p. 43.

which we cannot possibly accede to, on reflection, without direct violence to our inmost perceptions, and becoming deaf to the voice of Nature all around us * ; we may indeed give an *outward* assent, in deference to the Opinions of others, but we cannot be satisfied *within*. To contend, that " still we are obliged, on many occasions, to admit what we cannot either discover or comprehend," (though indeed true in various instances †,) is rather a Sophistic argument *on the point before us*, than a just and satisfactory deduction : For here, the Assertors of the Athanasian scheme, would confound the necessary distinction between what is above the reach of our Understanding, and what is repugnant to it—They would infer, that because we have not faculties to disclose the *mode* of God's Existence, or his

* " A continued relation runs thro' the entire system of material beings (or rather through the whole creation) which joins the *least* with the *greatest*, and shews the whole work to be *one*, and the effect of the *same* power and knowledge." Matho, vol. i. p. 194.

" I think the common Arguments, *a posteriori*, for the Unity of the Divine Nature, drawn from the Order and Harmony of the World, very good and sufficient. They make the Point morally certain, and render the other side of the Question highly improbable and *unreasonable*."—Inquiry into the Ideas of Space, Time, Immenſity, &c. by E. Law, M. A. (Bp. Carlisle) p. 177.

† i. e. In such instances as involve no contradiction.

his miraculous manner of *working*; He expects us to *believe* in a Mystery inexplicable, which *confounds his Unity, divides his Worship, and gives Him EQUALS in Infinite Power and Dominion!*

A long lapse of time (in which Example hath had its full effect) has reconciled men to doctrines which they have embraced, not, in general, from their own Investigations, but from an implicit reliance on the Opinions of others, and a shameful neglect of examining for themselves, whether those Opinions are well founded or not. Human Authority, Prejudice, and Custom, have not only prevailed against the express Injunctions of the Bible, but, in some instances, have been suffered absolutely to overpower the clearest Testimony of the Senses. If therefore, we experience any difficulties in the *First Principle* of our Religion, they may be fairly attributed to the surrender of our own Reason, and a deviation from that Path which was originally prescribed, in the gracious Dispensations of our Creator.

For, *With respect to the Existence of ONE SUPREME ALL-GOVERNING BEING, and the humble Acknowledgment of His wonderful and inscrutable Works*:—That in Him is centered the *exclusive* right of Adoration from all his Creatures throughout the Universe:—Supreme in Glory; in Majesty, Nature, and Dominion, *unassociated, unequalled!*—

that to him *alone* our gratitude, love, reverence, and faithful Obedience, *in the highest degree*, are due for ever:—*These* Principles, simple, clear, and solid, give rise to no perplexing difficulties, in us poor Beings : The *First*, thanks be to God, is placed far above the mist of Doubt, if we would suffer ourselves to be guided by the light of Nature or of *Revelation* ! and as to his glorious Operations, all Men with great facility believe (*though his ways are past finding out*) that every thing whatsoever, in the fullest sense, is possible with Him, *that doth not imply a Contradiction*. And herein the Mind, unclouded with Prejudice, rests satisfied ;—in all humility, and with great peace and willingness acquiescing in the Faith of the Infinite Power and Wisdom of God, which even the evidence of our own Senses daily confirms to us. But Reason starts at the assertion, that there are also *other* Beings possessing the same adorable and *boundless* Attributes ; this immediately throws the Mind into inextricable difficulty, and forces us into manifest contradictions.

THE pure and artless Doctrines of primitive Christianity, which are comprized in *the love of God and Man*, have been *wrested* into different and obscure meanings ; and the Worship of *One* God, strongly inculcated in both the Old and New Testament, has, through the long prejudices of succeeding Ages, the confused notions,
and

and mistaken zeal of Men, given way to the Glorifying and Adoring of *Three* distinct Divinities, or *Persons* in the Godhead, *Co-equal* *! in contradiction to the general tenour of the sacred Scriptures, and the natural discernment of all Mankind †. In short, while we acknowledge a *Trinity* of divine Persons, *co-equal* and *co-eternal* ‡, are the consequences at all wonderful when we go on to Worship them *all Three*, in fact, and not *One* only §?

The

* It is hardly necessary to remind the Reader of the *Litany*, the Creed of St. Athanasius aforementioned, the doxologies, &c.

† It is remarkable that, the most ancient Heathens, the most unenlightened Savages, have been led naturally to conclude, that *One* of their Deities must be *Superior* to all the others.

‡ If the Son was *begotten* of (or *produced* by) the Father, it seems clear that, the Father must have *Existed before* the Son; how then can they be *Co-eternal*?—See John vi. 57. Col. i. 15.

§ It has been said that the *Socinians* would willingly receive the Doctrine of the Trinity, if it were acknowledged that by it is meant no more than the adoration of "*Three internal Properties, or relations of the Deity to himself.*" But would not an Explication, *such as this*, be still keeping up a Mysterious tenet in Religion, (little understood by the Multitude at least) and, in fact, be unnecessarily attempting to make a Distinction without a Difference?—We might proceed to Worship *separately* every Attribute of the Deity with the same reason. And surely the *Worship* of the *attributes, modes, relations, or relative Properties, &c.* of the Supreme Being, as *distinct* from his Person or Substance from which they flow, is leading us directly back to the old system of *Heathen Theology*.

The efforts which have been made to qualify this visible defection from Revelation, are far from affording relief; for as to the Term *Persons*, however it may be subtilized to avoid gross Ideas, it must ultimately signify *Beings*; *intelligent Beings*; which leaves the difficulty and the danger much the same. "There are," say some, "in the Godhead, Three *distinct* infinite Minds or Spirits, three *individual* Substances, *separate Objects* of Adoration, but yet (incomprehensibly) united in *One*." What is this, at last, but teaching us to divide in Idea the Deity into *Parts*? In consequence of which, the Religious Mind is exceedingly distressed; our most exalted Affections and Services frequently *shifted*, and diverted from their *Great Object*, *The Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort**, and the first and most sacred *Commandments* of the *Bible*, in effect, *unhallowed, unobeyed*†.

We behold, in the instance of the Roman Catholics, that whenever Men relinquish the simple and rational Principle of worshipping only *One* God, they hardly know where to stop. *They* (who would think it a mortal Injury not to be called Christians),

* 2 Cor. i. 3.

† Exod. xx. 3. Deut. vi. 5. 6. Luke iv. 8. Matt. xxii. 37, 38. "Supreme affection cannot belong to two or more persons. We can but love *One* with *all* our heart," &c.—Mr. Lindsey's Apology, p. 92.

Christians), have proceeded to adoration and prayer, not only to the Trinity, but also to the Virgin Mary, all the Apostles, and to every Saint in their endless Catalogue; and are taught to believe their Salvation depends upon it.

Instead, therefore, of charging Mankind, as usual, with an obstinate disposition of *unbelief* in Religious tenets; it would, from these and many other examples, be more just to allow, that the *greater number* have ever been passionately inclined not only to Mystery and Superstition, but, sometimes, even the grossest absurdities and impieties have been imbibed with surprising facility, and *especially* in religious articles; of which the doctrine of *Transubstantiation* affords us a further and more striking proof.

But *Truth* is eternal and unchangeable; and our Blessed Guide taught us no other than Truth, however our own prejudices may have misled us, and perverted *his* doctrines. It is with the deepest concern that many pious lovers of the Gospel behold those precious Doctrines depraved, and the salutary fruits which might be expected from them, blighted for so long a period, by the superinduction of the *Trinitarian System*; which, from its perplexity, and the inconsistencies which *unavoidably* arise from it, has been productive of an inveterate Scepticism, for many ages, amongst the more *intelligent part* of the Christian World.

The

The Books which have been professedly written (often with the best intentions) to defend, or explain the *Albanasian* hypothesis, have strengthened the very Doubts they were meant to overcome; and by *forcing* the sacred writings to countenance such distracting Positions, they have converted *the Light* into darkness, and unhappily sometimes brought in question that authority and truth which would otherwise have continued clear and invincible. It is remarkable, and in the end will prove highly advantageous to genuine Christianity, that Those who have been used to distinguish accurately, can scarcely ever read the defensive Books abovementioned, without discovering in them nearly as many manifest contradictions as there are pages; a strong symptom of the Unsoundness of the Doctrines they contain. There is *a great gulf fixed*, by God himself, (though *we* cannot always discern it) between the boundaries of Truth and Error; and the most ingenious struggles to remove the Barrier will be ever found vain and ineffectual*.

IF

* A veteran Writer has lately reminded us that the doctrine of the *Trinity* in Unity is as clear as the proposition that, "*Three equilateral lines made One triangle*," and in consonance with this *demonstration*, we have seen the Godhead represented, in the first leaf of a very excellent religious publication, *by a Triangle*, surrounded with a Glory, &c. This piece of unwor-
thy

IF then it can be distinctly proved both from Scripture and the rational deductions of Men, that the Worship of a *Trinity* of divine Persons is contradictory, and the worship of only *One* God, consonant both to Scripture and Reason, it may be greatly hoped, that an Union of Faith in this most important point, will follow amongst *rational* Christians, however we may chuse to differ in the *manner* of performing our Religious Duties.

We shall first present some of the plainest deductions of Reason to elucidate the *positive Unity* of the Almighty, and to shew that no other Being can be *Equal* with Him; by which we have no other intention than to vindicate the solemn *Declarations* which follow from the Bible.

It may be premised, that as the Christian Religion was certainly not intended for the learned and penetrating only, but, happily, “for all sorts and conditions of men”; it, therefore, doth not appear at all probable, that a Doctrine of such magnitude and consequence as that of the Trinity is made to be, should be involved in deep obscurity

thy Artifice (though it borders a little on blasphemy) has flourished long; and the same miserable sophistry might be used to persuade us that there are *eight Gods in One*. Why? Because *eight* angles conjoined make only *One* octangle!

rity by Those who were sent to give us Light; scattered (as some think they perceive) by piecemeal, as it were, in their Records; and left to be discovered, explained, and reconciled by the weak and discordant faculties of men; while the Doctrine of *one* God, even *the Father*, is enforced throughout, by a Testimony equally *clear* and *uniform*. If the Salvation of Christians depended on the Belief of a *Trinity*, may we not think that so very Interesting an Article, calculated to influence and direct our *Practice*, would have been as distinctly revealed to us; elucidated by Those who were most capable; and a Worship formed accordingly, invariably insisted on by Them: and also plain and repeated Rules and Examples given of such Worship, (like those appropriated to *the Father*) that there might be no easy occasion left for doubt, error, or neglect in any, even in the meanest who should become sincerely desirous of knowing the Truth, on so fundamental a point, and Obeying it? But as the *received* Doctrine, stands, "it must needs be a very learned, and a
 "very subtile, and a very ingenious thing to be a
 "good Christian." *

We now offer our deductions to shew the Divine Unity.

Affirmative

* The words between commas are Dr. Jortin's. *Remarks on Eccles. Hist. Pref. p. xli.*

Affirmative Proposition.

Two, or more, *All-Perfect* Beings, (or *Persons*) are not only *unnecessary*, but also *Inconsistent*.

Proof.

Unnecessary. Because, admitting an *Independent* Being, *existing and acting eternally*, of *unlimited* Power, Wisdom, Goodness, Knowledge and Justice*; there can be no possible *necessity* for any other of *equal* Perfection.

Inconsistent. For, *supposing* there were two, or more, such *Infinitely Perfect* Beings in the Universe; it would follow that, *All but ONE of them, must necessarily desist from the EXERCISE of their Powers UNIVERSALLY*: which *unavoidable* suspension, directly contradicts the possibility of their being all *equally* perfect, because *All* could not be *eternally Independent and Unlimited* †.

With

* The Reader may, if he pleases, see this Point (respecting the *unlimitedness* of the divine Attributes) demonstrated, in Bishop Law's *Notes to Archbp. King's Origin of Evil*, 2d edit. from p. 46 to 52. In Duncan's *Baxter*, (a most excellent publication) sec. i. p. 4. and, indeed, in many other Authors.

† If the Deity *himself* Presides *universally and eternally*, with *absolute* Dominion and Independence, it is clear that, no other Being *whatsoever* can share in any Operations, but by a Power *derived from and dependent* on Him.

With respect to a Being who is, on any occasion, *restrained* from the free use of its Powers, or who can exercise them *only partially*, or in a *limited* Circle;

If we say that He acts *always in concert* with *two other* Divinities (or Persons) *equal* with himself; it will follow that, a *positively independent* Power, is *never* exercised by *either* of them: Power *absolutely Infinite* is *then* divided; which is a *Contradiction*.

If we should rather think, that They Act in *voluntary Conjunction*; still we must suppose that the *inherent* Powers of these *Three Equal* Beings, *were* distinct in each, but *conjoined by mutual agreement*; now, it appears that such an Union cannot consist with Power *absolutely Infinite*: because again, this *unbounded Perfection*, as such, must be ever *indivisible* and *incommunicable*. Where, therefore, are Attributes, *positively Infinite*, to be sought for but in *One*?

In short, the *Father himself*, is either *absolutely Perfect*, or he is *not*. To suppose He is *not*, would be both Impious and Absurd. But if we conclude (as we shall find ourselves obliged to do) that He possesses *absolute Perfection*, in his *own Person*; then no other Being, or *Person* whatsoever, can be supposed to possess the like, without a contradiction. For *Positive Perfection*, (among other Attributes) including *Power unlimited and uncontrolled*; it follows, that but *One* can possess *such* Perfection: For there can be but *One* Divine Person, or intelligent Agent, who is *universally and eternally Absolute*;—there can be but *One* (Eternally) *All-Directing, All-Perwading Power*. Therefore, notwithstanding the most subtile arguments, we are reduced to this dilemma at last: we must either deny that *the Father* possesses this *absolute Perfection in Se*; or we must confine it to *Him alone*;—and acknowledge that *His consummate and unequalled* Attributes render *Him all-sufficient and Supreme*.

Circle;—it is not the *One* we are seeking. The Attributes of the LORD of the Universe, whom we are contemplating, are solely *underived*, and *perfectly free*, and his *unbounded Power* (universally and constantly exerted) * leaves no possibility for any other to subsist *in the same degree*.

Absolute Perfection is, therefore, consistent with *One Being only*;—with the *Most High*; eternally and unchangeably existing *in his Person alone*.

For, as above, it is a manifest contradiction to suppose *two* (or more) Beings *positively Unlimited* †.

The *Unity* of the First Cause being established, to say, that this Adorable Being has bestowed, or communicated, an *equal* degree (that is an infinite degree) of his Power, Wisdom, Goodness, &c. to any other Being; is to declare that the Creature can be made equal to the Creator, or the *Effect* equal to the *Cause*.

It is grossly Inconsistent to suppose that the *Eternal Father* can be the CAUSE of any Being or Person, *Equal* with *Himself*.

The

* Psalm. lxvi. 7. ciii. 19. cxlv. throughout.

† In Power, Authority, Dominion, &c. See 1 Chron. xxix, 11, 12.

The last is as simple and as clear a Proposition as can be offered to the Mind, and needs no comment.

Contented with a demonstration that the Almighty Author of all Things is truly *One*, the intelligent, but humble Philosopher, pretends not to describe the *manner* of His Existence; it was Athanasius, or rather *his Followers* *, who from a mistaken zeal, (influenced by a false Philosophy) presumed to divide and subdivide the Deity, and shew the mode of His Existence; torturing the faculties of Mankind by making *One* a Plurality, or constituting a *Threefold* God of *One* God: and then they unmercifully fulminated everlasting perdition on all those who did not, or cannot now, believe *their* Hypothesis.

It will not be said that Objections have been made to this Hypothesis, for want of sufficient *Time* to reflect upon it; or for want of serious attention to it; or a due exertion of the rational Faculties upon it; since experience shews us that the longer and the closer it is investigated, the more insuperable its Difficulties appear. Among many others the following may be added to those preceding.

When

* In justice to St. Athanasius, it should be *generally* understood, that there are strong reasons to believe, that the *Creed* ascribed to him, was not written until, at least, 60 years after his time; but by *Whom* is not certainly known.

When we consider the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost* as *Persons*, or Beings *Distinct* or *Different* from the *Father*; we find ourselves forced to conceive that their *Powers* must be either *Inherent* or *Derived*.

Now if their Attributes be *absolutely Inherent*, like those of the *Father*, and their *Persons distinct*, then it evidently follows that we have *Three Distinct Independent Gods*. But if their *Powers* are *Derived*, so must be likewise Their *Existence*; and then they (the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*) are, in consequence, *Effects*, be They ever so *Exalted*. This conclusion appears to admit of no *Qualification* whatsoever, as has been attempted: Because the least *Derivation* of their *Powers*, or (if the expression may be allowed) of any *part* of them, destroys at once the possibility of their *Equality* with a *Self-Perfect*, *Self-Existent* Being: Whose Attributes we believe are *All* as *absolutely Free* and *Underived* as His *Person*.

The NOTION of considering the *Persons*, or *Subsistences* of the *Son* and *Holy Ghost* as originally *flowing* from the Substance of the *Father*, in like manner with His *Wisdom*, *Power*, &c. is not Correspondent, or Correlative: For the *Wisdom*, *Power*, &c. of God, are absolutely His *own Properties*, and, in fact, indistinguishable from *Himself*. But the Advocates for the received Hypothesis, will hardly allow the Second and

Third *Persons* of the Trinity, to be the *Properties* of the Deity : if they do, it is in truth, giving up the *Athanasian* Doctrine ; and the whole System dissolves into a speculative Dream of the Schools.

Again. To say that the *Father*, not from *Choice*, but *Necessity* of Nature, did Produce *two other Beings Equal with Himself* : seems to derogate from the *absolute Freedom* of God's *Will* ; and, especially, it still maintains the old *Contradiction*, that *Effects* may be *Equal* to their *Cause*.

In a word. The visionary Doctrine, " of *Beings* Issuing from the Deity without the *Consent* of his *Will*, *Equal* to Himself," &c. seems utterly repugnant to every Idea we have of His Majesty, Freedom, and unrivalled Power*.

But it is probable that neither these Difficulties, nor any other that might be advanced, would ever have so much disturbed the minds of conscientious Men, had they not conceived that the whole Hypothesis herein contended against, is plainly dissonant not only to the dictates of human

* The above notions have all been advanced by different Writers, in favour of the Athanasian doctrine, but as it appears that such Opinions will not stand the test of a close examination, it is unnecessary to refer the Reader to the writings which contain them.

human Reason, but also to the general spirit of *Revelation* itself.

It is freely confessed on all sides, that our deductions often deceive ourselves:—that our *Reason* is truly weak and defective:—but Imperfect as it is, and little as some affect to esteem it; it is still the gracious Gift of God: and, after all, is the only Light we possess to distinguish Truth from Falshood: Good from Evil. But the received System supposes the Deity to shut out this Light in order to introduce another, reflected from the Athanasian Creed, which blinds and confounds the most dignified Faculties He has bestowed upon us. This CREED demands a Faith arising from an arbitrary Sacrifice of the noblest Privilege of the Soul;—the Liberty of *Thinking* and *Reflecting*; and the Doctrines which are its genuine Offspring, very naturally, reprobate our assent to the plainest demonstrations *that* Liberty may afford us. WHILE we are awed by the threatnings of this merciless Edict, and entangled by its incomprehensible Positions, the Mind, unable either to disregard its denunciations or unravel its perplexity, remains both afraid and unprepared *to give a Reason of the hope that is in us.*

Chained for Ages as we have been, by the Authorities of Men, how long shall we continue en-

veloped in their Darkness, or bound down by their Prejudices? And how do we reconcile such a gloomy, lethargic Captivity, to the cheerful and benevolent dictates of our Religion, which, in a language that comforts and expands the Heart, declares that, *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty?* 2 Cor. iii. 17.

Submitting the above observations, however, to more enlightened Minds, and far from presumptuously *depending* upon any deductions of our own; we shall proceed to bring proofs of a more decisive nature, from the Old and New Testament, of the *Unity of God*, and (without multiplying Quotations too much,) select a few which are strictly in Point; and as free from *intricacy* as they are from falsehood. If words have any fixed signification, one should have thought that those which follow from the sacred text were alone sufficient, (had not experience taught us otherwise) to prevent the possibility of the least doubt or hesitation in the minds of men who pay any regard to Revelation.

It must be owned, indeed, that the ignorance of human nature, and our proneness to error are so great, that a prudent man is justly fearful of giving the reins to his own Imagination, in a matter of so vast Importance as this before us. We are moving on sacred ground, where
every

every step should be taken with reverence and caution. But when we find the Testimony of the inspired Writings, so clear and strong in favour of *the absolute Unity of the Deity*, it appears to be a criminal weakness to withhold our assent to a truth, which so nearly concerns His Transcendent Glory; which frees us at once from all Perplexity; meets the fullest investigations of human Reason; and administers to the believing Mind the invaluable blessings of Satisfaction and Peace. And it is, with great submission, offered to the serious Consideration of some men, whether, *from Experience*, any different Faith is ever likely to produce these Effects?—and whether, while they are maintaining with so sharp a Zeal, a system which acknowledges more *Objects* of Divine Worship than *One*, and transfers the most sacred Honours alternately from one to the other, they may not be too often in danger of Forgetting and Offending *Him*, the *Father Omnipotent*, Who hath declared that *He will not give His Glory unto another*. Isa. xlviii. 11. and *Whom*, our blessed Master, with an awful reference to His Power, has warned us to *Fear* above all? Luke xii. 5.

Proofs of the UNITY of God from the *Old Testament.*

Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord HE is God in HEAVEN ABOVE and upon the Earth beneath: there is none else.—
Deut. iv. 39.

Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord HE is God, there is none else besides HIM.—Ibid. ver. 35.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is ONE Lord.—
Ibid. vi. 4.

See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God WITH ME: &c.—Ibid. xxxii. 39.

*To whom then will ye LIKEN ME, or shall I be EQUAL? saith the holy ONE *.—Isaiah xl. 18. 25. xlv. 5.*

I am the first, and I am the last, and besides ME there is no God.—Ibid. xlv. 6.

Is

* From these very words one would think that the Prophet foresaw the distracting Tenets of the Trinitarians! Do either of the discriminating terms, *One, he, him, I, me, thou*, in the Hebrew, or in any other language, imply or denote a *Plurality*?

Is there a God besides ME? yea, there is no God: I know not any.—Ibid. ver. 8.

There is no God ELSE beside me; a just God, and a Saviour: there is none beside ME.—Ibid. xlv. 21.

For I am God, and there is none ELSE: I am God, and there is none LIKE ME.—Ibid. xlvi. 9.

All nations whom THOU hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.

For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: THOU art God ALONE.—Ps. lxxxvi. 9, 10.

The 44th, 45th and 46th Chapters of the Prophet Isaiah contain a continual repetition of the Unity of the Deity; enforced in a most remarkable manner in the 45th. The holy *One* of Israel is the frequent Title of God throughout that Prophet, and his *Unity* very plainly expressed in all the others!

The Prayer of Hezekiah must likewise appear so conclusive on this subject, to every unperverted Understanding, that the inserting a part of it here can need no apology. This Prayer was *heard*, and the signal Event which followed, shews that there is only *One* from

Whom we may expect relief in the extremest Exigencies. O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, THOU art The God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the Earth: THOU hast made heaven and earth.—Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his (Sennacherib's) land, that all the kingdoms of the Earth may know that Thou art the Lord, EVEN THOU ONLY. Isa. xxxvii. 16—20. (Comp. Acts iv. 24—31.) Is it possible that the defenders of the Athanasian doctrine, should strain these words into any consonance with that System, without confounding all language, and converting the clearest expressions into Sophisms and Obscurity? How long, therefore, halt ye between two Opinions? if the LORD be God, follow HIM. 1 Kings xviii. 21.

It is completely Evident, throughout the Old Testament, that Moses and the Prophets, who acted immediately under a *Divine Revelation*, acknowledged but One God, but *One Divine Person* or Intelligent Agent, and Worshipped *no other*. If, therefore, the *present* Doctrine of *Three Divine Persons* in the Godhead, *each* of them Objects of Religious Worship, be true: It will follow, that the *Worship* so jealously and rigorously insisted on by Moses and the Prophets, must have been, in the very foundation, *Imperfect* or *Defective*

Defective. But it appears very harsh, if not Impious to conceive this. They were *taught of God.* It cannot then be presumptuous, we hope, to believe that the God of Light and Truth would assuredly have informed the Prophets, if there were any Others *whatsoever* to be acknowledged as God *besides Himself*: because any *Error or Defect* in that most *Essential* point would, in fact, have been as *Great then* as at this day. The New Testament is a Declaration of a *New and more glorious Covenant* with Man, by Jesus Christ; but not of any New or Different Objects of Worship. *It is written*, saith that Great Messenger, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and HIM ONLY shalt thou serve.* Matt. iv. 10. Luke iv. 8. Our Saviour, most certainly, here refers to the strict Commands on this head, which are recorded so frequently in the Old Testament. The Revelations from God can in no wise be discordant, especially with respect to the *Object* of Religious Adoration. If there were *Three Different Persons* in the Godhead, EQUAL and ETERNAL, it is hardly possible to conceive that *Two* of Them should have been wholly unnoticed When the OBJECT of Divine Worship was so Professedly and Openly Declared by *Prophets*, on numberless occasions, and in the most Solemn manner. Would the *Second* and *Third* Persons of the (supposed) Trinity, have

have been *then* neglected or past over? There can be little or no doubt but that *They* also would have had *Their Rights* as *clearly* Asserted and Proclaimed;—to the end that, all enlightened People, in every period, in *the times of the Prophets* as well as now, might *Discriminate* Them in their *Worship*; administer the Honours *ever* justly due to *Each of Them*; and Implore *Their respective* Blessings and Protection.

But the Lord our God, from Whom *every* Blessing descendeth, and on Whom our very Existence continually and absolutely depends; Who spake in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, and in these last days unto us by his Son; and Who hath announced repeatedly that *He* has no *Equal*:—even HE ‘the Father Almighty’ hath enjoined that *Divine* Worship shall peremptorily be confined to *One Object*, that is, to HIMSELF ONLY;* Who is a God Jealous of this His *distinguishing* Glory, which, it is apparent, He cannot share with any Other, without a palpable diminution of His own unspeakable Greatness and Dignity. *Whether, therefore, it be right in the sight of God, to bearken unto men more than unto God, Judge ye,*
The

* Exodus xx. 3. xxii. 20. xxxiv. 14. &c. &c. To which the words of Christ, Matt. iv. 10. Luke iv. 8. as quoted above, are in exact agreement.

The Argument above, is open to the most common Understanding, and requires but little Reflection: It will not be totally dropped in the ensuing pages: but we now proceed to the New Testament.

Proofs of the UNITY from the *New Testament.*

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is ONE Lord.—Mark xii. 29.

And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save ONE, that is God.—Luke xviii. 19. and Matt xix. 17.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the ONLY true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.—John xvii. 3.

Seeing it is ONE God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Rom. iii. 30.

For there is ONE God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.—1 Tim. ii. 5.

ONE

ONE God and Father of all, who is ABOVE ALL, and through all, and in you all.—Eph. iv. 6.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the ONLY wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.—1 Timothy i. 17*.

See also Mark xii. 32. Acts xvii. 23, 24, 25. 1 Cor. viii. 4. 6. Gal. iii. 20. James ii. 19. Jude 4, &c.

IF the doctrine of the *Trinity* had been as clearly and peremptorily insisted on in the *Scriptures*,

“ * It is a principle with me” (says *Archdeacon Horsley* in his *Letters to Dr. Priestley*) “ that the true sense of any phrase in the New Testament, is, what may be called its standing sense, that which will be the first to occur to common people, of every country, and in every age.” This is, without doubt, a good general rule: let it be applied, therefore, to the citations above, which are made from both the sacred Books. Such plain and reiterated Testimony may have its proper effect. It is certain that those passages afford some of the strongest evidences that can be produced, at this day, of the *divine origin* of the *Scriptures*; seeing *They* were the *First writings in the World* which discovered to Mankind, and declared in express terms, that great and leading Truth, the *Unity of our Almighty Creator*; and indeed, *they* were the only Documents, for many Ages, which preserved and maintained that holy Doctrine, in direct opposition to those gross Polytheistic Principles, which, unhappily, overspread the greatest part of the Earth.

tures, as *Is the Positive Unity* of God; no serious Believer in Revelation would have contended one moment for the latter.

But it may be expected that the *latter* will ever be *earnestly contended for*, since our sacred Records present to us such decisive declarations as the above; which were certainly intended to free us from all dilemma, and to guard us against any deviation from the important Truth they enforce. "If," says a venerable writer, "we cannot arrive at absolute certainty in this great Point (the Divine *Unity*) by the Light of Nature, we ought to be the more thankful for the benefit of Revelation, which has put it past dispute."* Experience teaches us that this Revelation is directly consonant with our own feelings. The *Oneness* or *Unity* of the Supreme Being, is a Principle so easy and familiar to the Mind, that the generality of men, when they think of God, naturally think of Him as *One* absolutely, and not as *Three*. It is not until we recollect, or are reminded of the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, that we find ourselves perplexed and uneasy. In pursuing our reflections on that Doctrine, the Mind soon becomes filled with doubt and distress; and, in

* Rev. Mr. Law's (Bishop of Carlisle) Enquiry into the Ideas of Space, Time, Unity of the Divine Nature, &c. Edit. 1734. p. 177.

in order to recover our serenity, we are obliged to drop so embarrassing a system, and recur to *the One God and merciful Father of All*.

It will doubtless, hereafter, appear astonishing that it should have been necessary, at this time of day, to recite authorities which have been open to the world for so long a period in the *Bible*; for the purpose of establishing a *Truth*, which not only that enlightened Page, but also the whole surrounding Creation continually beareth witness of *!—*They*, however, must be accountable for such repetitions who seem determined to make them still necessary.

But

* Psalm xix. 1. — “ The plain Connexion of one thing upon another, through the whole material Universe, through all Parts of the Earth, and in the visible Heavens; the Disposition of the Air, and Sea, and Winds; the Motions of the Sun, Moon, and Stars: and the useful Vicissitudes of Seasons, for the regular Production of the various Fruits of the Earth; have always been *sufficient* to make it *evidently appear*, even to *mean Capacities* (had they not been perpetually *prejudiced* by wrong Instruction) that all things are under the Direction of *one Power*, under the Dominion of *one God*, to whom the whole Universe is uniformly Subject. And in fact,—the *wisest* and *best* Men, in all *Heathen Nations*, have ever seen, and in good measure maintained, this great Truth. — But it is with *greater Clearness* from all appearance of Doubt, and with *greater assurance of Authority*, confirming the Dictate of Reason, that *the Scripture sets forth to us this First Principle of Religion*.”

Clarke Post. Sermon. Vol. I. Sermon. ii. P. 29, 30.

We cannot end this section without a remark on one of the texts we have been quoting from the New Testament. Our Saviour, on a very solemn occasion, addresses himself directly to *the FATHER*, and affirms Him to be *the ONLY true God*, John xvii. 1. 3. Is it possible, therefore, that any Being or Person *Different from the Father*, can be *the true God*? It requires no small force upon the Mind to refuse our assent to this declaration of our Lord's, which is clear and pointed. In vain may Prejudice lead us to other parts of Scripture which may *seem* to favour a *contrary* Doctrine. The sacred writings cannot be so dangerously inconsistent and contradictory. It is certain that our Saviour could never have said in a fervent Prayer, or in any other instance, that *the Father is the ONLY true God*, if it had not been true in the fullest and most extensive sense. The occasion was momentous. He informs the Christian World, just before his Crucifixion, that *Life Eternal* flowed from the Knowledge of *the only true God*, and of *the gracious Messenger whom that God had sent*. The Knowledge of *the true God* is a Blessing of the Highest nature, for which, neither we nor any created beings, can possibly be too deeply Thankful. And the knowledge of Jesus Christ is also essential to our happiness: Because it includes the knowledge of the *Doctrines* of this divine Messenger; which were given to him, by the kind and merciful Father of Mankind, that he might deliver them from the deplorable consequences of Vice, and gross Ignorance: from the calamitous effects of savage brutality, and the most wretched errors into which they had fallen. This he faithfully laboured to accomplish :---Leading them with a gentle hand, into
the

the auspicious light of a most true and rational Religion: Inspiring them, by his own Example, with active Virtue, unconfined Benevolence, Humility, Resignation;—qualifying them by degrees for a State of consummate Happiness, which, we are assured, shall be without diminution and without end! These Principles have been justly said to contain the Substance of the Christian Dispensation; but men have not been satisfied with them: The introduction of a mysterious Hypothesis which deprives them of all their simplicity, and the maintaining of some Selfish Opinions which tend to destroy the cheerful Hope of the all-extending Mercy and Compassion of the Universal Parent, have thrown the World again into a scene of darkness, doubt, and contention.

But the awful voice of the Prophet heard of old, will not be in vain. *The loftiness of man shall be bowed down:—the Time will come, and we hope it is now approaching, when the vanity of human system will be felt and humbly acknowledged; the Nations of the Earth be brought to a just sense of their Duty to their Great Creator; and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that Day.* Isaiah ii. 11. 17.

I have sworn by MYSELF, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return; That unto ME every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Ibid. xlv. 23.

That they may know from the rising of the Sun, and from the West, that there is none besides ME. I am the LORD, and there is none else. Ibid. xlv. 6.

John iv. 24.

OF THE
H O L Y G H O S T.

*The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word
was in my tongue.*—2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

*But there is a spirit in Man: and the inspiration
of the Almighty giveth them understanding.*—
Job xxxii. 8.

SINCE the Supreme Being is declared from
the sacred Records to be strictly and truly
ONE; therefore, by the *Holy Ghost* must be meant
no other than the Spirit of the Almighty himself *;
(and indeed often so called in the Bible) compre-
hending the same ineffable *Power* that was ex-
erted in the *Creation* †, and which eternally per-
vades

* It sometimes implies his *effective power*;—sometimes his
divine *illuminations*, said, Acts ii. 17. to be “*poured out by Him,*
(or *effused*) *upon all flesh*,” and, therefore, in such instances
cannot signify a *Person*.

† Genesis i.

vades the whole Universe, and every individual therein, material or Immaterial * !

To assure *us* of so astonishing a Fact as the last, it is plainly intimated *in Scripture*, that it is this all-quickening, this Inspiring Virtue which *sometimes Acts on the Conscience* † as an AID to that *internal judgment of ourselves*; intimidating the Wicked, and supporting, with the most benevolent animation, the (comparatively) Good. And perhaps we shall not err if we assert that this *Scriptural* Truth must be (without any enthusiastic interpretation) sensibly experienced by any one who *designedly* engages himself in an Action of *Moment*, whether good or evil ‡. If in a just and virtuous undertaking, he feels (though it be
admi-

* See Jeremiah xxiii. 24. Ephes. iv. 6. Matho, vol. i. p. 273. and Duncan's Baxter, p. 19. and 38.

† See Rom. viii. 16. Ibid. ix. 1.

‡ Probably this gracious *intimation* may be given because the *consequences* of human Actions sometimes spread wide and deep, affecting multitudes, as well as the Individual who may be the original Cause. The merciful intention of such Interpositions may be therefore readily conceived. But as Dr. Jortin has very judiciously observed: This Divine Assistance still "*leaves us free Agents, it compels not, but only inclines and aids, and that it may be resisted.*" Jortin's Sermons.

St. Stephen may, perhaps, allude to this general Influence, Acts vii. 51.

administered imperceptibly) an unusual complacency and pleasure of Soul, *strengthening his conscious Integrity*, and greatly encouraging him to proceed:—if in a wicked or malicious pursuit, he perceives an *inward* signal of Guilt, an impression of disquietude or horror (in proportion to the mischief *intended*) which he cannot possibly *extinguish*, though he may endeavour to *smother* it. Yet it appears, that this *warning* impulse, or *light divine*, is gradually diminished in obstinate, hardened Sinners, corrupted by a long course of vicious practices; but it is questionable, whether it be ever *wholly* withdrawn, since the most profligate Villains have suddenly discovered symptoms of remorse and contrition: *It may, perhaps, be left in a certain degree, for an irresistible and standing Evidence (unextinguishable even in the most abandoned) of the Almighty's utter abhorrence of iniquity and falsehood; though such Men will not always confess their inmost feelings.*

Blasphemy of, or Contumacy (which are distinct Offences) against the Holy Ghost, or, in other words, against this Holy *Spiritual Influence*, may therefore well be styled in the Gospel heinous Impieties, (being directly levelled against the Majesty of God *himself*);* and the Scripture

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meaning

* For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Philip. ii. 13.

meaning of the latter, as it regards *Ourselves* at this hour, is plainly this,—*The sinning wilfully against the Special Emotions of our own Conscience* *. The awful admonitions, so strongly felt on such *Momentous* occasions, may be justly deemed *the Power of God working within us*.

Restraints and encouragements are equally necessary, we find, in the wisest human institutions; and they appear to be made use of in the moral Government of the World, by the Supreme Governor, himself, often on occasions where human power cannot possibly reach. This opinion is countenanced by the general voice of Revelation; and it seems reasonable to hope from the boundless Goodness of God, and from His *Infinite Perception*, that He will not wholly expose so frail a being as man to the miserable consequences of his Imperfection; but will graciously administer all the proper checks and encouragements which his nature and situation may require. And it is to *Him* alone, the Universal Parent, that in gratitude we should ascribe every salutary warning, and every Spiritual consolation.

The simplicity of these Principles will indeed but ill accord with the subtile speculations and
ideal

* *This, perhaps, is the most arbitrary and affecting Proof of the Free-Will of Man! But the Conscience will still re-exert its Powers.*

ideal distinctions, which have engrossed the minds of men for more than 1400 years, but we shall find them amply supported by the Gospel, *whence they take their rise*; recommending themselves by their very simplicity at once to the heart and understanding.

OUR Saviour tells the Scribes, Matt. xii. 31, 32. that *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come*. Now those men, filled with malice, were denying and blaspheming the holy Ghost, at the very time he said these words, (which indeed occasioned them) for they, with great dissimulation, affirmed that our Lord had a *Devil*, when he was *casting out Demons* by the immediate co-operation of the holy Spirit, or *Power of God**: Matt. xii. 28. *But if I cast out Devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you*. This verse has reference to the severe denunciation above, and plainly declares, that the Holy Ghost is no other than *the Spirit of our God*;—that it is precisely so meant in the Scriptures†; and the context shews also, that those

Blasphemy against God's supernatural Manifestations not to be forgiven.

D 3

people,

* Allusively *finger of God*. Luke xi. 20.

† See Matt. x. 20. which compare with Luke xii. 12. Acts ii. 4. 16, 17, 18. Ib. v. 32. Rom. viii. 11. 14. 1 Cor. ii. 10—14. Ib. iii. 16. compare with Ib. vi. 19. (and with 2 Cor.

people, the Scribes and Pharisees, were sinning against the ordinary influences of this most sacred Spirit of Truth on their own *Consciences*; for they could not, as our Saviour observes, possibly believe, “ that *Satan was casting out Satan, and thereby destroying his own Kingdom.* They contumaciously resisted and gave the lie, therefore, on a great and affecting occasion, to their own *inward*

2 Cor. vi. 16.) Ib. vii. 40. Ib. xii. 3. Eph. iv. 30. Heb. x. 15. 16. These texts alone, when compared and attentively considered, seem to fix this point beyond any rational doubt. —It may be observed, that the Holy Ghost is, in a few places of Scripture, termed *he*; when, it appears, the Father *himself* is meant; (compare 13, 14, and 15 ver. of John xvi. with Ib. xvii. 1) and sometimes, *it*, or *itself*; when the spirit or *Influence* of the Father is understood; this may be generally discovered by the Context. When, therefore, we pray to God, in conformity to the Scriptures, *for the Grace of the Holy Spirit, the assistance of the Holy Spirit, &c.* we then, undoubtedly, pray for the assistance of God *himself*. Were the Holy Ghost (or holy Spirit really a *distinct Person*, it is wonderful that we should in *no* place of sacred writ be instructed to offer *any* supplications to this *different Divine Person*, whose *peculiar* gifts we mean to implore: on the contrary we are uniformly directed in *Scripture*, to address our prayers and thanksgivings to God *only*, from *whom* we are expressly told *every* blessing *spiritual* and temporal cometh. How is it then, that we do *give his Glory unto another*?

We learn from Ecclesiastical History that the Worship of the holy Ghost, as a *Person* different from God the Father, was not introduced into the Church until its *Doctrines* began to be grossly corrupted: this circumstance is well worth attention.

ward feelings and conviction; and moreover uttered a most impious Insinuation * which, in the Gospel language, was *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*,—the all-permeating Spirit or Energy of the Supreme Being! *which*, while it manifested by a gracious *Miracle*, that the *Divine power* was eminently present with our Saviour, did not fail to enable him to detect their inmost thoughts, and to expose immediately their malicious hypocrisy and falshood. Hence, and from the texts below, it will appear, that the terms *Holy Ghost*, or *holy Spirit*, *Power of God*, *divine Presence*, &c. are *Identical*, and *referrible to God alone*.† It is easy to discern from the warmth with which Christ declared the dreadful consequences of blaspheming the Spirit and Power by which he acted, (and from the distinctions which he makes, Matt. xii. 31, 32.) that he considered it, in effect, as the blaspheming of *God himself*. And the relation of the Deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, in the *Acts*, among many other Instances, demonstrates that the Apostles held this very Doctrine ‡.

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We

* Mark iii. 30.

† See a remarkable passage. Psalm cxxxix. 7—10. and also Notes † and *, page 37 and 52.

‡ Acts v. Where (it is almost unnecessary to observe) in the 3d and 4th Verses, God and the Holy Ghost are very naturally

We shall endeavour to confirm the Truth of the foregoing Positions, by a short series of Evidence from the *New Testament*, in which, we think, it will be clearly discerned, what slender foundation we have, to distinguish the operations of the Holy Spirit from the operations of God *himself**; and how inconsistent it is to consider *that* as a *Person*, which is described below to be a *Power* communicable by an Apostle, but flowing Primarily from the *Deity*, as from its Source, and modified according to *His* divine Will.

Have ye, says St. Paul, received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? and they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. i. e. given.

And

rally and expressly made *the same*. The awful catastrophe of Ananias and Sapphira (convicted by St. Peter of having *tempted*, by their falsehood, "*the Spirit of the Lord*,") will serve to shew what powerful effects may be produced by the Operation of the *Divine influence* (or holy Spirit) on the *Conscience*.

* We do, and may very properly, distinguish the *Power* of God from his *Wisdom* and *Omniscience*; His *Justice* from his *Goodness* or *Mercy*, &c. But in whatever manner these, or any other of his *Attributes* may be exemplified *externally* (as in the instance of Ananias and Sapphira) they are, in reality, still inseparable from his *own Person* or *Substance*, even in *Idea*.—And so indeed the Apostle hath shewn us,

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and propheesied.—Acts xix. 2. 6.*

Thus we find this divine effusion, this *Gift of God*†, was suffered to be “*imparted*” by the Apostles to their Converts or disciples; which surely shews, beyond any reasonable doubt, that by the holy Ghost, is here meant the *Operative Power* of God, and not a *Person*. For it should be noticed that it was the *Holy Ghost Itself* which is thus said to be Imparted;—not a Power *From* a Divine Being *distinct* from God or *the Father*—But from *whom* these Spiritual excellencies were truly derived, will appear in the next Paragraph.

Now, there are, says the Apostle, diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.—And there are diversities of operations, but it is the Same God who worketh all in all.—1 Cor. xii. 4. 6.

St.

* See John xx. 22, and observe the remarkable action of our Saviour, which shews plainly what is *there* signified by the Holy Ghost: viz. not a *Person*, but an *holy inspiration*.

† John vii. 39. Acts viii. 19, 20. xi. 16, 17. xv. 8. 2 Tim. i. 6, 7. Titus iii. 4—7.

St. Paul who here tells us that, it is the *Same* God who worketh *all in all*, or who, by the fulness of His Operations, effecteth *all things*, has likewise assured us that there is but *One* God, and that this *One God* is the *Father*, 1 Cor. viii. 6. Christ himself expressly confirms this, John xvii. 1. 3. It follows that there can be no *different* source of these spiritual Gifts. Taking this important Intelligence along with us, the passages quoted will throw a strong light on the subject immediately before us; as they discover that the *holy Spirit* of the Scriptures, must necessarily signify, either the effluxes of *Divine Virtue*, or the *inspirations* of the *Almighty*, so graciously infused by *Him* into the Prophets of old, and still more illustriously and fully communicated to Christ *especially*, and afterwards to his Apostles*:—A *miraculous Power* proceeding from the Deity, *centering* in him *alone*, and as *inherent* in *Him* as any other of his glorious Attributes.

That *David* considered the holy Spirit in this very light, is sufficiently clear from the following instance. In his fervent Prayer to God, Psa. li. 11. he thus expresses himself. *Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not Thy holy Spirit from me.* Where it is plain, from the last words, that the royal prophet conceived this Divine Assistance to
depend

* See Luke i. 68. 70. iv. 18. 21. 1 Cor. xii. 28. Ephes. i. 3.

depend entirely on the Will of the Almighty *himself*; and, consequently, did not believe it to be under the direction or contrôle of any *different Person* or Being: And it is in this sense that we find ourselves obliged to understand what is said of the holy Spirit (with very few exceptions) throughout the Bible.

In Luke i. 68. 70. to which we have just referred below, *the Lord God of Israel* is said to have *spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets*; and if the *holy Spirit* had been there said to have spoken by the Prophets, the Jews, or the first Jewish Christians, (who certainly were best acquainted with their own Idiom) would have understood the phrase to signify *exactly* the same.

It may not be improper to observe here, that several of the early Fathers of the Church, (upon whose authority we rely to this hour, in many of our solemn rites, and forms of worship) were strangely infatuated with the visionary tenets of *Gentile Philosophy**. The doctrines of *Plato* especially,

* See Mosheim's Eccl. History; and also Middleton on *Miraculous Powers*; wherein the gross Credulity and absurd Doctrines of some of the ancient Fathers are sufficiently demonstrated from their own Writings.

The Notion of considering the *Attributes* of the Supreme Being as *distinct Deities* or *Persons*, is of very antique standing. It

cially, were, it seems, highly venerated amongst them; and it is much to be feared, (notwithstanding their great merit in other respects) that they ventured in some of their religious Institutes, to blend the most esteemed of the Heathen dogmas with the pure Precepts of our heavenly Master:—that wandering from the clear paths of the Gospel, they lost themselves in the mazes of *Science, falsely so called*. And, indeed, one should imagine, with regard to the present subject, that those early Converts to Christianity, allured by the pleasures of philosophic speculation, or seduced by the force of long custom and Example, had declined from their heavenly Guide, and unhappily fallen back again, in some measure, into the strong and prevailing tide of Polytheism. Thus, as the Grecians had converted the *wisdom* of Jupiter into a Goddess;

It seems to have had its birth in the *Poetic* language of the *East*: Thence Plato (it is said) borrowed it; who ingrafted it into his Theology, and taught it *literally*.

The following curious *forgery* discovers the indiscreet zeal of some ancient Christians for the doctrine of the Trinity, and from *what authority* they sometimes ventured to derive it:

Πρώτα Θεός, &c.

First God, and then the Sonne, and next the Spirit,
All coeternal, one in act and merit.

This is an answer declared to have been given by the God *Serapis*, to *Ishules*, a king of Egypt during the *Trojan Wars*! on his inquiring, "Who was most blessed?"

Vid. Vives on St. Aust. Civ. Dei. B. x. c. 23.

deſs; ſo they, *ſeparating the Divine Attributes from their Principal*, reſolved the Wiſdom and Power of the Supreme Being* into a *diſtinct* Deity; and then, by the ſubtileſt refinements, in vain endeavoured to preſerve the divine *Unity*, which Chriſt and the Prophets had taught the World, and which the airy deluſions of a borrowed Philoſophy had clouded and confounded†.

Thoſe who are at all acquainted with the writings of the primitive Fathers, of whom we have been ſpeaking, will not think the foregoing opinion ill-founded. To any diſpaſſionate reader of their works, it muſt appear that ſeveral of thoſe learned Converts from Paganism, newly inliſted under

* The *holy Ghoſt* is plainly called the *Wiſdom, Might or Power of God*.—Iſa. xi. 2. Luke xi. 49. xxiv. 49, 1 Cor. ii. 4—7. Eph. i. 17. This eaſily accounts for the putting the Holy Ghoſt ſometimes in Scripture for *God himſelf*.

† The opinion of the eternal Deity (as it is generally called) of our Saviour, ſeems to have ſprung from the ſame ſource. The following obſervable *confeſſion* will ſhew the laſting hold that ſpeculative doctrines, ſanctioned by great names, will ſometimes have on the wiſeſt Men. It is taken from the Commentaries of a man of great piety and excellent ſenſe, the learned John Ludo- vici Vives, on St. Auguſtine's famous work *de Civ. Dei*. Note on C. 29. B. 10. "*We, ſays Vives, teach it out of Plato, that by the word of God were all things made, and out of Plotinus that the Sonne of God is the Creator!*"

under the Banners of the Christian Faith, seem to have willingly laid hold of any passage in the sacred writings that might countenance, or in some sort, indulge the remains of their affection for the *Platonic System*, which it is evident many of them were loth wholly to relinquish. Besides their situation was particular. Surrounded by the unconverted Gentiles, they might flatter themselves that some complying accommodation to the most refined of their old Principles, would render their new Profession more palatable to those Idolaters, and lead them more willingly into the paths of Christianity. However this be, it appears that several of the Fathers thought they had discovered room for some indulgence in their former Philosophic Speculations, even in the Gospel itself: and therefore they did not scruple sometimes to mold its Principles into a Form, which their deep-rooted prejudices, and the polytheistic malady of the Gentiles, inclined them in general to admire*.

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* We are frequently referred to the ancient Fathers of the Church, in order to fix our *present* Faith and Mode of Worship. But what, in the name of Truth, have *we* to do now with the Opinions and Practice of the Fathers *in those respects*? since most of their Tenets and Writings are totally subversive of *Protestantism*, and, (notwithstanding their acknowledged piety) charged with the most confused and absurd Doctrines, without any foundation in the sacred Writings, and calculated chiefly to support

IT is very observable that St. John, the most Lofty and *Figurative* writer of all the Evangelists, is (speaking under correction) the only one of them who *seems*, in a few passages, directly to *Personify* the Holy Ghost: or to make it an Agent *distinct* from God*. But when all reasonable allowances are made for his Exalted Style, he cannot without great affectation, be supposed, to contradict himself on so important a matter:—for his declarations that *All Power* is derived alone from God the Father, are perhaps,
as

support those very corruptions which have separated us from the Romish Church. Have we not, by the blessing of God, the Scriptures *themselves* handed down to us? and is it really *still* a question, whether we are to make those *Holy Records* the Rule and Measure of our Faith, or the Doctrines and Principles of those very Fathers who were the Founders of the Romish Superstitions?—Who, indeed, are of use “to inform us what *they* “believed and practised, but not what *ought to be believed* “and practised.”

* See John xiv. 16, 17. 26. xvi. 7. 13. These texts, in particular, have inclined several worthy men to believe that the holy Spirit is indeed a *Person*, but yet far inferior to the *Father*; —a *Ministring* Spirit of the very highest Order, but *not* an Object of *Religious Worship*. We are not concerned to controvert *this* Opinion; but would rather leave it to the judgment of all, whether the weight of sacred Evidence produced in these pages, doth not, upon the whole, render the doctrine we have offered, greatly the more consistent of the two? The *Comforter* promised in St. John, appears, by the event, to have been a miraculous transfusion of *Spiritual gifts and Power from on high*.

as explicit as any throughout the whole Bible. A remark lately made by a learned Writer*, will help us to judge of the oriental Idioms contained in the sacred writings. He very justly reminds us that *Wisdom* is made a *Being* in the viii. of *Proverbs*, and that *Charity* is directly *Personified* by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xiii. as is also the *Wisdom* of God, Luke xi. 49†. but no one can possibly understand such language in a literal sense; unless, as the same Writer observes, it be from a predetermination to support a favourite Hypothesis.

We humbly apprehend that it is in the like Animated manner with the last mentioned instances, that St. John, in recording the sublime Discourses of Christ, has *Personified* the Divine *Assistance* of God: for it appears highly injurious to suppose that this Apostle, who was himself a Jew, would superinduce another God, in express contradiction to his own writings‡, to the declarations of his Beloved Master, of Moses, and all the Prophets.

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* See Mr. Lindsey's *Catechist*, P. 104, 105.

† Other remarkable instances of this enlivened style of the East, (viz. the change of Things or Qualities into *Persons*) may be seen in the ancient (Apocryphal) Book called the *Wisdom of Solomon*. Chap. vi, vii, viii, ix, &c.

‡ John xvii. 3.

There is a passage of St. Paul, written in the same Elevated style, which, at first sight, might lead to the prevailing Opinion, viz. the *distinct* existence of the Holy Ghost. It is in Rom. viii. 26, 27. where he says, *the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.* And again. *The Spirit itself maketh Intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* Yet the whole tenour of this Chapter, if read with attention, will satisfy an impartial Mind, that the Holy Ghost is no other than the Spirit of God: and it is not difficult to perceive that the Apostle means here that, the *Grace* of God aideth us against our infirmities;—and that His *Mercy* pleadeth strongly for us. And indeed how often in scripture is it said, in compliance with our feelings, that the tender Compassion of God intercedeth for his Creatures:—that His Mercy to our weaknesses and infirmities is long-suffering and unspeakable;—that He sees and laments our Perverseness, *until his Spirit will no longer strive with man?* Accordingly we are cautioned *not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God.* St. Paul goes on to say that, *the Spirit maketh Intercession for the Saints, according to the will of God.* But *who knoweth the Will of God but the Spirit of God, or God's Spirit?* None. As the words of the same Apostle clearly imply. 1 Cor. ii. 11. Where he compares *the intimate knowledge that a man's Spirit only can have of himself, with the knowledge which God's Spirit alone can have*

of the things of God. Hence we may infer that St. Paul, neither in the above instances, nor in any other, ever means to distinguish *positively* the Holy Spirit from God *himself*. See Isa. xl. 13, 14.

This Apostle who in Gal. iii. 20. asserts in direct terms that *God Is One*, and so pointedly distinguishes Him from *all that are called Gods*. 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6. could never intend to inculcate any *Plurality* in the Deity*. But if Men will still insist from such figurative texts as have been produced, or referred to, that by the *Spirit* is meant a *distinct* Being; they should observe that, they cannot from thence maintain its *Equality* with the Almighty, since, if we must take those passages *literally*, It is therein made a *subordinate* Agent, an *Advocate* or *Intercessor*.

But it would be far more consistent with the general strain of the Scriptures, and infinitely more clear to the common apprehensions of Mankind, to consider the Holy Spirit as, in fact, implying the Deity himself, or his *own Spiritual manifestations*. And if it be true that *Speculative* Opinions add little or nothing to the general

* Christ says, John iv. 24, that *God is a Spirit*; but we nowhere find him, in contradiction to this, declaring that *God consists of Three different Spirits, or Persons*;—a Doctrine which must inevitably infuse into the human mind *Polytheistic Ideas*.

general stock of real Knowledge, we shall reap but small profit in continuing to Labour under the dark shade of those mysterious Theories, which have so long served to bewilder and confound the Understandings of Men; and which evidently appear to clash with the first Great Principle of our Holy Records. It is true indeed, that such perplexing Subtilties will never have much weight with those who freely reflect upon them, and who are taught, by the endless Controversies they have occasioned, to believe that they have done more real and lasting Injury to the Christian Religion, than its most inveterate Enemies have ever been able to accomplish. Serious and thinking Men are persuaded that, The holding any Being whatsoever, in any possible sense, to be *Equal* with the FATHER, is, notwithstanding any qualifications that may be offered, *a dangerous, palpable, and direct Attack upon His Supremacy*: Whom, the Bible proclaims to be the *One God and Father of All; Lord of Heaven and Earth*. And further. That the Doctrines contained in what is called the Creed of St. Athanasius, have conveyed down to us, through a more subtle Medium, the very Polytheism of the Heathen*; and, of course, have

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helped

* It is well known that this observation appears but too justly founded. The *Platonists* asserted a *Trinity* in the most express terms: A powerful Intimation to Christians, whence the

helped (however unintentionally) to contaminate the Essence of true Religion, and to Lessen, though they cannot destroy the Effects of that gracious and directive Light which was communicated to Man *at the Beginning*, and uniformly strengthened by every subsequent Dispensation.

To return: It is evident, from the concurrent testimony of Scripture, that our blessed Redeemer himself, and his Apostles also, performed all their *Miracles* by the *Extraordinary* influence, and most mighty assistance of the *holy Spirit of God**; or, which

the Doctrine had its Origin. “ Porphyry (explaining *Plato*’s “ Opinion, as *Cyril* saith against *Julian*) puts *Three* essences “ in the Deity. 1. *God Almighty*. 2. *The Creator*. [or the Son]. “ 3. *The Soul of the World*; nor is the Deity extended any “ further.” How little this differs from the present received System, the Reader will judge. And, accordingly, even unto this day, we see men are driven to the Doctrines of *Plato*, in their endeavours to explain and support their notions of a *Trinity*. The Pythagoreans and the Platonists appear to have been the first who taught the World to divide the Deity into *Parts*. The Former it seems “ had a religious regard for the “ number *Three*, in which they placed *all Perfection*.”

Vid. Vives Com. on St. Augustine’s *Civ. Dei*. B. 10. N. on Chap. 23, and 29.

* Isaiah xi. 2. Matt. iii. 16. John iii. 34. Ib. xi. 40—44. Ib. xiv. 10. Acts i. 8. Ib. viii. 13, 18, 19, 20. Ibid. x. 38. Ib. xv. 12. Rom. xv. 19. Heb. ii. 4. The distinction is, that our Saviour *himself* was endued with these Gifts *without measure*, He being full of the Holy Ghost, (Luke ii. 40. iv. 1.) or the power of God dwelling *more fully* in him,

which is the same, by the *Power of God himself* acting with them. And this seems to deserve particular attention, as many have been led to conclude from the stupendous Miracles of Christ, that he must certainly be *God*, and, of course, the Object of Supreme Worship; not distinguishing that those Miracles were wrought by a transcendent Power derived immediately from the Deity, and not from any *Innate Power* of Christ himself; as will be shewn from sacred Authority. Those who think that Miracles, and the Knowledge of future Events, are sufficient to command Religious Worship unto Them who have displayed such Powers; should consider that, in this case, not only Christ, but Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles also, would, in consequence, be all of them Objects of Divine Worship. Thus we should fall directly into the Error of the People of Lystra, Acts xiv. 8—18. (an Error which, indeed, has not been peculiar to them). But by attending to the following testimonies, we shall be able to make the proper distinction. In Luke v. 17. we find that while our Saviour, surrounded by the Pharisees and Doctors of the Law, was teaching them and the People, it is added;—*and the Power of the Lord was present to heal them* *. But in the citations which follow, we see those wonderful works ascribed more immediately and *directly* to their *Principal*.

E 3

Thus

* See Acts iv. 29, 30.

Thus on the miraculous healing of the sick of the palsy by *Christ*. Matt. ix. 8. *When the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God who had given such power unto men.* In consequence of his raising the only Son of a Widow from the Dead, Luke vii. 16. *There came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great Prophet is risen up among us: and that God hath visited his people, i. e. visited them by His Prophet; and by the signal Power which He communicated to that illustrious Representative.* Again. On the cure of a Child, by the same great and compassionate Delegate. Luke ix. 43. *The People were all amazed at the mighty power of God. And when the blind Man received his sight near Jericho, he followed Jesus, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it gave praise unto God.* Ib. xviii. 43. This appears to have been the general sense of all those who on the spot beheld these Miracles. *Inasmuch that the multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.* Matt. xv. 31.

The attributing these Miracles ultimately to the *Almighty*, was a construction not confined to the Crouds that frequently surrounded our Lord merely from curiosity. St. Luke informs us xix. 37. that, on the remarkable Occasion when our Saviour, followed by a vast concourse of the People, made his Triumphant entry into Jerusalem;

salem; it was then that his numerous *Profelytes* united in giving an open and a glorious testimony of *their* conviction from *Whom* all those instances of Divine Power had proceeded. For, *at the descent of the mount of Olives*, on their approach to the City, inspirited by the Presence of their Great Master; *The whole multitude of the Disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen**. Now that they were not mistaken in thus referring these mighty acts to the *Deity*, and not to any other Being; Christ himself, and the Apostles also, have fully confirmed.

Go, saith our Saviour to the man of the country of the Gadarenes, whom he had healed; *return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee*. Luke viii. 39. On a similar occasion, he marks with distinguished approbation the piety, and grateful exultation of the Leper, who, for the mercy he had just received, *with a loud voice glorified God*: and then, with great humility, thanked the blessed Instrument of His goodness. Luke xvii. 11—19,

E 4

We

* See also Luke v. 25, 26. xiii. 13. Note. Whenever the term *God* is mentioned *absolutely*, it always, in Scripture, means *the Father*; as is plain from the explanatory passages, Mark iii. 35. compare Matt. xii. 50. John viii. 41, 42. 2 Cor. i. 3. xi. 31. Eph. iv. 6. 1 Theff. iii. 13. James iii. 9, &c. The *LORD God* of the Old Testament, is, very often called by the more indulgent name of *the Father*, in the New.

We may observe that our Lord is solicitous and watchful to lead the Attention of his Disciples from these surprising *Effects*, up to the true *Cause* of them. At the sight of the *withered Fig-tree* *. Mark xi. 20, 21. St. Peter expressing his astonishment, our Redeemer takes the opportunity of exhorting his Disciples to have confidence in that Almighty Being, by a firm faith in *Whom* they should accomplish things far more wonderful:—*Have faith*, says he, *in God*. On that affecting occasion, when he was about to raise his beloved Lazarus from the Grave, John xi. he, in a short but significant Address, openly offers up his acknowledgments to that Supreme Power which enabled him to call the Dead again into Life! and to confirm by that illustrious testimony, the Truth of his Divine Embassage. *Lifting up his eyes*, he saith, *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou bearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.* The whole relation of this benevolent Miracle is solemn, and pathetic in the highest degree: and the

* This Miracle was, very probably, done as a type, or emblem of the Curse that should befall the Jewish Nation for their obstinate unbelief and *Unfruitfulness*. See Bp. Law's *Considerations*, N. * P. 321. from whom this Idea is borrowed. The Bp. applies it, (very properly) to Luke xiii.

the Thanksgiving preferred to God at the moment before Lazarus was *called forth*, shews the earnest desire our Saviour had of manifesting, not his own glory, but the *Glory of God*. Ver. 40. Indeed, our Lord in his declarations that *he could do nothing of himself*, sufficiently evinced that he never thought of arrogating to *himself* the power of working these Miracles; or of ascribing them to any other Being, or Person, than the FATHER, *Who*, he repeatedly asserts, *dwelt in him and did the works* *.

Our Saviour continually represents himself as acting under the Guidance and Authority of *the Father*. He refers to *the Father* alone as his *Sanctifier*, and the sacred *Witness* of his divine Mission †; making no separate appeal to the holy Ghost. He declares *the Father* alone to be Omniscient and Omnipotent ‡. He asserts *the Father* to be the immediate *Revealer* of the most important Truths ||; and the *Dispenser of good things*, Matt. vii. 11, by which are here meant *spiritual endowments* §. - He tells his disciples that
it

* See the texts N †, P. 61.

† John v. 31, 32, 37. vi. 27. viii. 17, 18. x. 36, 37.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 36. Mark xiii. 32. xiv. 36.

|| Matt. xi. 25, 26. xvi. 16, 17.

§ See the parallel passage, Luke xi. 13.

it was the Spirit of *the Father* that spake, or should speak in them *, and, consequently, in no instance directs any Acknowledgements to be made *distinctly* to the holy Spirit. Are not these circumstances utterly unaccountable on the supposition that the holy Ghost is a Divine *Person*, EQUAL to the *Father*, and *Different* from Him?

St. Peter immediately after that gracious effusion of supernatural Powers from above, Acts ii. takes occasion to proclaim unto the astonished Multitude, the origin of them all. *THIS is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.* (Joel ii. 28, 29). *And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of MY Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.—And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of MY Spirit; and they shall prophecy.* Again ver. 22. *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which GOD DID BY HIM in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.* To the same purpose are the following declarations. Acts xv. 12. *Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders GOD had wrought among the Gentiles by them.*

* Matt. x. 20.

them. Again. Ib. xix. 11. And God wrought special Miracles by the hands of Paul.

What sufficient authority, therefore, from the sacred Writings, or from reason, there is to distinguish the Holy Spirit into a *third Person*, we cannot find or comprehend *: surely by *this distinction*

* The following texts having been often produced, and thought by many to be clearly favourable to the Trinitarian System; we shall, therefore, endeavour to give, what we apprehend to be, a proper explication of them.

Matt. xxviii. 19. *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost.*

The purport of this Form of *Baptism* we take to be this, viz. *The entering into a solemn Obligation to obey the Doctrines and Precepts of the Gospel: which we are sincerely to believe, were communicated to Christ, for the universal benefit of Mankind, by God, even the FATHER, and confirmed by the Miraculous attestations of His sacred Power or Spirit.* It appears, however, from the *Acts*, and from St. Paul's Epistles that, the Apostles did not think it necessary to follow the above Form in Baptizing their Converts, but, most frequently, if not always, Baptized them in the name of *Jesus Christ* only: i. e. Initiated them into the Religion which Christ taught. *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ,* Gal. iii. 27. viz. put him on as an *Example*: acknowledged him as a divine Guide and Master. Now this more concise mode of Baptism, if the above explication be allowed, amounts to the same as that recorded in St. Matthew, comprizing all that is meant by *Baptizing* in the name of the Father,

we do not heighten our conceptions of the glory,
benevolence, or power of the *Almighty himself*;
but

ther, &c. Whereas if *more* had been intended by the words in St. Matthew, it is hardly conceivable that the Apostles would have ever ventured to omit any part of that Form on so interesting and instructive an Occasion.

2 Cor. xiii. 14. *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.*

This passage contains a pious wish of the Apostle, that, the Grace, or *Favour* (*χάρις*) of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Medium of the Divine Assistance; (Or, by *Grace*, may mean the like *Mind*, or Disposition, *which was also in Christ Jesus*) and the love of God, which is the foundation of every Blessing; and the communion of *his* holy Spirit or Divine Influence, might Inspire and actuate the Corinthians. "The text includes a compendious wish of all the Blessings of the Gospel."

1 John v. 7. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the holy Ghost: and these three are one.*

This famous passage, which is supposed directly to imply a Trinity, is of *very* doubtful authority. Many of the most Learned Christian Advocates have maintained it to be absolutely *spurious*. Among other strong reasons, they assert that it is not to be found in any *authentic* Greek Manuscript whatsoever: "in none Elder than the invention of Printing." Should it, however, be genuine (which is difficult to believe unless it were better grounded) it only infers, as the context shews, that, the Almighty Father himself, Matt. iii. 17. 2 Pet. i. 17.—the purity and superior excellence of the Word or Christian Doctrines; and the holy Spirit or divine Powers, communicated by the Father in the fullest manner to Christ;
—all

but rather, most ungratefully, would transfer them in part to *another* *.

So far were our Lord and his immediate disciples from giving birth to a doctrine so injurious and complex, that they seem to have taken pains to shew us that there is no foundation for such a *personal distinction*, (as the Reader must have observed in the texts already cited or referred to.) They uniformly teach us that *all Power* proceedeth from God *alone* : † and our Redeemer testifies

—all bear witness with united force, that, *he is the Son of God* :— which no Christian will deny.

Much the same meaning has been given to these texts by others ; and some such explication must be allowed them, or they cannot be reconciled to the general sense of Scripture : And we are told by the Compilers of the 39 Articles that “ we may not so expound one place in Scripture that it be repugnant to another.” The construction which is here put upon the above texts will hardly be thought *forced*.

* To what is called a *Third Person*. Yet it certainly is not ungratefully *meant* ; it is the love of God *misplaced* ; and must often serve to keep our Heavenly Father at a distance, as it were, from our attention, by introducing into the mind (what is supposed to be) *another Object of Adoration*.

† *My Father is greater than all*. John x. 29. *I can of mine own self do nothing*. Ib. v. 30. *The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works*. Ib. xiv. 10. (Here, it is very observable, our Saviour plainly considers the Father and the Holy Ghost as the same.) *Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast Given me are of thee*. Ib. xvii. 7. *For there is no power but of God*. Rom. xiii, 1.—See also John v. 44.

testifies that, by the *Holy Ghost* is signified, not Power only, but also that *Divine Light*, (than which there cannot be a greater *Comforter*) the *promise of God* *, which guideth us into all Truth, and which our heavenly FATHER giveth to them that ask him in sincerity †.

What know ye not, saith St. Paul to the Corinthians, *that your body is the temple of the holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*—1 Cor. vi. 19.

Or, *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* 1 Cor. iii. 16.

These two passages very evidently and clearly explain each other.

In the iiid chap. 2 Cor. the Apostle intending to point out the more free and glorious dispensation of the new Covenant, when compared with that of the Law under Moses; declares the Gospel to be given *by the Spirit of the living God*: that this Spirit is *the giver of (eternal) life, through Christ*: and then, cautious lest he should be misconceived, says expressly afterwards, Now THE LORD IS THAT SPIRIT, ver. 17. How perfectly doth

* Acts i. 4, 5. Luke xxiv. 49. Eph. i. 13. † Luke xi. 13.

doth this revelation harmonize with that other explanatory passage of the same Apostle; *To wit, that GOD was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself!*—See 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

Still we want not further confirmations of this important Truth. The enlightened Writer in 1 Cor. xiv. 18. and also in his 2d Epistle to Timothy iii. 16. declares again, (thank God in words which cannot justly admit of doubt) *Who* is ultimately meant by the *holy Ghost*:—under *Whose* sacred *influence* and *direction*, he, and the rest of the Apostles, had been *Acting* and *Writing*; and to *Whom* their gratitude was due;—in the following clear and remarkable expressions. In the first passage, after treating of *Spiritual gifts*, he says, *I thank MY GOD, I speak with tongues more than ye all.* In the second, he asserts that, *All Scripture is given by inspiration of GOD. Who*, it is declared in another place, did distribute all those wonderful endowments, and spiritual blessings, *according to his OWN Will*:—*GOD also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts (or distributions) of the holy Ghost, according to HIS OWN WILL.* Heb. ii. 4.* By the term *God* is here meant *the Father*, this is evident, the holy Ghost being afterwards
noted

* Compare Ephesians i. 11. See also 1 Cor. xii. 11. which compare with 1b. ver. 28.

noted (amongst other Divine favours) in the same sentence. We may, therefore, observe that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile this passage to the Athanasian system. It doth not appear reasonable to think that the holy Ghost, (although a Being or Divine Person *different* from the Father, and *Equal* with Him, yet) should not be determined by *his own* Will, or Authority, in the distribution of those Gifts, which the above System supposes to be *peculiarly* his own: But, waving an argument which possibly may be controverted:—

That which (on the Trinitarian hypothesis) constitutes a still greater Difficulty in the text under consideration, and also in several others, and which, indeed, appears insuperable, is this, that God is therein positively declared to be the GIVER, and the *holy Ghost* the GIFT: And it seems impossible to conceive how a Divine *Person*, or *Intelligent Agent*, can be said, with any consistency, to be *poured out*, *shed*, or *Distributed*!

Thus, we are humbly of opinion, it appears demonstratively, from the sacred testimonies adduced, that the gifts or powers, therein called the gifts of the holy Ghost, were the Spiritual Dispensations of God *himself*, from *Whom* they all *originally* flowed, and not from any *other* Being
whatsoever.

whatsoever. If therefore we consider those supernatural Endowments *abstractedly* from the Deity; we must then, in order to preserve the consistency of the Scriptures, and a rational Faith, resolve them into the effects of a *Divine Afflatus*, or *Celestial Virtue* *, exerted in different modes and degrees, and imparted to different Agents, but still issuing *primarily* from *One* and the *Same* Great Fountain of All Blessings, even from *the Father*.—Our heavenly Teacher and his Disciples, were well aware that the true *Unity* of the Deity could be preserved by no other Doctrine †.

Do not err, therefore, my beloved Brethren. Every good gift and Every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the FATHER of lights ‡, Who, as St. Paul comprehensively expresses himself, is above all, and through all, and in you all. Amen.

OF

* Luke vi. 19. viii. 46. 1 John ii. 20. 27.

† Therefore the Evangelist, and the Apostles, have been careful to repeat to us that, *He who anointed Jesus and themselves with the holy Ghost and with power, is God.*—Acts iv. 27. x. 38. 2 Cor. i. 21. 22. 2 Peter i. 17.

‡ James i. 16. 17. These words of St. James (which agree with those of *Christ*, Matt. vii. 11. Luke xi. 13.) appear to be sufficiently decisive, and to confirm the Principles contained above: since it is plain that, if *every* good and *every* perfect gift cometh from the FATHER; no good or perfect gift whatsoever, can *originate* from any *other* Being. To *Whom* therefore, are our highest Praise and Gratitude due?

F

OF OUR
SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

Behold, my Servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well-pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him; and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.—Matt. xii. 18.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the ONLY true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.—John xvii. 3.

THE UNITY of the Most High God, is a TRUTH which, by his watchful Providence, has been preserved, *in many*, from the days of Adam, through all the dark and complicated systems of Religion, unto this clouded hour: it never has been totally lost sight of, nor ever will be. Its permanent duration is, alone, a presumptive proof *that it is a Truth.*

The violent Contentions relating to the Nature of our Redeemer, which have thrown the Christian World, for so long a period, into the most unhappy divisions; in all appearance, arose principally (as hath been noticed) from a very early admission of the Eastern Philosophy amongst Christians.

tians. The simplicity that reigns throughout the Gospel, was ill exchanged for those dark and delusive tenets which have introduced an almost total confusion into its Doctrines. The proper and necessary Distinction between the Invisible God and His Messenger, is, in a great measure, lost: How just and advantageous it would be to recover it in the minds of men, it is hoped, will be sufficiently shewn in the following pages. Happy it is that the undertaking is made easy; since the authentic documents of our Religion have been Providentially transmitted to the present age.

He who brought life and immortality to light, it appears above, (John xvii. 3.) was sent by the Supreme Being to confirm to us that great and most essential Article, *His Unity*; as it was before taught by the Prophets in the Old Testament*; and to instil into mankind the purest Religious Principles, the most benevolent Ethics, that ever were promulgated on earth.—The divine Messenger, in his own person, exemplified a perfect and immoveable adherence to them, and calmly resigned his sacred Life as a solemn Testimony of their truth and efficacy†. From the dignity of

F 2

his

* See Matt. v. 17. Rom. xv. 8, 9.

† In what sense this great Event may be said to be a *Propitiatory*, or an *atoning* sacrifice, (when we consider the tender Mercy, and
Placability

his Mission, the force of his Doctrines, his un-
 exampl'd Innocency, and the Power with which
 he was *invested**, he is called in Scripture the *Son*
 of

Placability of our *heavenly Father*, whose divine Justice is ever
 pacified by *repentance* and *amendment*, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Isa:
 xliii. 25. lv. 7. Ps. lxxxvi. 15.) *we* are unable to determine.
 (a) What follows, however, seems clear. It is declared in Scrip-
 ture *that he died for our Sins,—that his blood was shed for our Re-*
demption: an important Truth; for had not the human race
 been buried in Sin and Ignorance, he had never been sent on
 Earth; his afflictive Death, which he *foreknew* and *foretold*, was
 the *consequence* of his appearance in this World,—the Seal of his
 Mission: he became therefore, most truly, a Sacrifice for, or
because of, the sins and corruptions of Mankind. Acts iii. 26.
 Tit. ii. 14. 1 John iii. 5. 8. Thus (*even in this sense*, though
 the construction may not reach the full meaning) “gave he his
 life a Ransom for Many;” and *through* him, viz. (conditionally)
by the faithful observance of his Doctrines, and by his Mediation,
 we are, indeed, *reconciled* unto God, and have a way opened to
 eternal life. The notion which some have adopted, that the
 shedding of his precious Blood (a fact which strongly illustrated
 his humble Obedience to the Will of God, and his excessive love
 of Mankind,) was *alone a complete and sufficient satisfaction* for
 the Sins of *All*, must surely be erroneous; since, in that case,
 there would have been no need of his *Intercession afterwards*; nei-
 ther should we have been taught “*to work out our own Salva-*
tion with fear and trembling.” Philip: ii. 12.

(a) See *Bishop Law's* excellent *Considerations on the Theory of Religion*,
 Note *x*, Page 281, 5th Edit.

* And that he (who is to be our future deputed Judge) re-
 tains great power and authority in the Christian World, for the
 welfare of the *Church*, of which *he is the Head*, is explicitly re-
 vealed in Scripture.

of God: A denomination further justified by his supernatural Conception. His Precepts are clear, solid, and comprehensive; instructing us, as the first and great Principles, on the firm basis of which, every Religious and moral Perfection is raised, (and in proportion to our observance of them, the great Hope of future happiness strengthens and increases:)—To love the Lord our God, with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our Mind; to Worship Him alone in Spirit and in Truth: and, to do unto all Men as we would they should do unto ourselves.*

Accordingly, ever attentive to the Great Author of his Mission, and careful to prevent any misconstruction of his own Character, which his astonishing Powers might have occasioned; in the *especial Prayer* that he composed for his Disciples, he teaches them to address themselves to *God the Father only: Our Father who art in heaven; hallowed be thy Name, &c.* In this Divine Form, calculated for general benefit and observance, and which, therefore, assuredly is not *defective* in the main Point; we find not the most distant hint of a *Trinity*;—no other Object of Worship or Glorification

* See Matt. iv. 10. Ibid. vi. 6. Mark xii. 30. John iv. 23, 24. See also Rev. xiv. 6, 7. Ib. xix. 10. But his own Example is abundantly sufficient. See Matt. xi. 25. Luke v. 16. Ib. vi. 12. Ib. xxii. 41, 42, &c.

fication proposed but *the* FATHER. Now was there the least necessity to Pray to any other Being *whatsoever*, or to adore any other, our Saviour certainly would not have misled his disciples and the world, by *neglecting*, on that important occasion, to insert in his *form of Prayer* what would *Ever* be absolutely necessary to *true Religion*, and conducive to the happiness of his followers. This single argument for the Unity, appears so decisive, that, surely, any contrary opinion, must maintain its ground, merely from our perusing the sacred writings with inattention or prejudice. We are indeed taught in many places of Scripture, to pray to the Deity *in our Saviour's Name*, (after his departure hence) as our great *Higb Priest*, *Mediator* and Guide, *the Christ of God*; but, we humbly conceive, not to him, who *himself* always Prayed, and gave thanks to the Almighty, and thereby plainly distinguished himself from the great and glorious God of All!

The prevailing custom of offering religious Adoration and Prayer to the *Son* as well as to the *Father*, is a direct avowal of *Two* different Objects of Divine Worship: (for the *Son* is certainly not the *Father*.) It is an acknowledgment of *Two* Divine and all-Intelligent Agents. So it appears to many sincere Christians: and they think that this Practice not only seems to condemn the strict
Injunctions

Injunctions of the Old Testament, but also the Precepts and Example of Christ himself; * who, assuredly, never intended that his Disciples should place him on any Equality with his God and Father; his *Dependence* on Whom he signifies in the most solemn and expressive manner.

When our Redeemer was expiring on the Cross, he sends forth this emphatical Exclamation! "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" † and again he saith, *even after his glorious Resurrec-*

F 4

tion,

* Our Saviour, John iv. 22. 23, plainly declares himself to be a *Worshipper* of the Father, with the rest of the Jews of his time. There are a very few passages which appear to some to favour Prayer or *Petition* to Christ: but we (who, however, do not presume to decide for others) are cautious of yielding to any singular or obscure text, an equal weight with the *many* clear Rules of the Gospels and Epistles on this point; as the opinion just mentioned, doth not consist with those general Precepts and Examples, nor with the positive directions of our Saviour himself. See Matt. vi. 6. 9. John xvi. 23, 24. and texts *Note*. Page 115.

Whenever we are at a loss to form our judgment on this, or any other controverted article of importance, there seems to be left to us no *Rule* more satisfactory and justifiable, than that of being determined (as has been before observed, *Introduc. N. † P. xiii.*) by the *most* evidence, and the *clearest* we can find in the *Scriptures*.

† Probably, applying to himself, and his most affecting situation, the prophetic words of the *xxii* Psalm.

tion,† John xx. 17. *I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to MY GOD and your God.* These plain and remarkable Expressions of our Saviour's, which fully acknowledge the superiority of the Deity, and his dependence upon him; one should think sufficient to *Impress* for ever their very great difference. In John xiv. 28. he directly says, *my Father is GREATER than I.* In order to reconcile this pointed assertion to the doctrine of the *Trinity*, we are sometimes told, that Christ only meant to say here, that his Father was *greater* than himself *as to his human Nature, and not with respect to his Divine.* But how is it possible to think that Christ, either here or any where else, ever meant to compare his *mortal Nature* with the most perfect and ineffable Essence of Almighty God? If he meant any comparison, it must surely have been between his

† That he was raised from the Dead and *Glorified* by the *Power of God*, see Acts ii. 32. Ib. iii. 13. 15. Ib. v. 30, 31. Ib. x. 40. Ib. xiii. 30. Rom. viii. 11. Ib. x. 9. 1 Cor. vi. 14. 2 Cor. xiii. 4. Gal. i. 1. 1 Theff. i. 10. Heb. xiii. 20. 1 Peter i. 21, &c. In John x. 18. Christ says—*I have power to lay it (his life) down, and have power to take it again.* However this passage is to be understood, our Saviour sufficiently declares his Dependence by saying directly; *This Commandment have I received of my Father*: which intimation may also explain John ii. 19. But see the texts referred to in this Note, which are all clear and express.

his *Spiritual or heavenly Nature**, and that of his Father's, since *that* only could bear any sort of similitude. In the words above, therefore, our Saviour clearly professes his subordination, and again, in Matt. xxiv. 36, and Mark xiii. 32. he declares his *Knowledge* (and here he certainly referred to his *superior* part) to be below that of his Father's."†

HOWEVER strongly prejudiced men may be from the long prevalence of human system, it is certain that the sacred writers have taken great pains to assert the Supremacy and unequalled Majesty of the one God and Father of the Universe: and have also so clearly discriminated the Characters of the Almighty and his Messenger, that it is truly astonishing how they could ever be confounded. St. Paul, for instance, has settled these great points, one should think, in the most satisfactory manner. Eph. iv. 6. and 1 Tim. ii. 5. But, not to confine ourselves to the Apostles' assertions, let us attend to the words of Christ himself. *I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me.* John vi. 38.

Neither

• The most *exalted* part of his Nature.

† See Acts i. 7. He, (may his name be for ever honoured) who in unparalleled humility, refused even the appellation of *Good*, could never mean to *equal* himself with the *One* great Source of All Goodness, as he declares *God* to be. Mat. xix. 17. Luke xviii. 19.

Neither came I of myself, but he (God) sent me, John viii. 42. In these, and in many other passages, he expressly marks his Inferiority, by declaring his Submission to the Divine Will, and also distinguishes himself from God who sent him: as in John xii. 44. He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. Again. John v. 31. 32. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is Another that beareth witness of me, and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. He, indeed, insists on his Mediatorial Character in very emphatic words. No man cometh unto the Father but by me. John xiv. 6. From these texts it is perfectly clear that, the Persons of our Saviour and of God, are absolutely distinct: and it is as clear that the former claimed no higher honours than an acknowledgment of his divine Mission, and a sincere acceptance of him as the appointed Medium of Salvation to all those who will learn his doctrines and obey them. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my*

* He tells the Jews, John v. 23. *That all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father, he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.* As if he had said: Those who honour not the Ambassador, honour not the Potentate who sent him. That Christ assumed here no higher dignity than that of God's Messenger or Ambassador, is plain from his telling the Jews just before ver. 19. *That the son can do nothing of himself:* And that the Father had Given him authority to execute Judgment ver. 27.

my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life, John v. 24. The Holy Innocent Jesus, the righteous servant of the LORD, (Isa. liii. 11.) could never think of assuming any Equality with his Almighty Principal, by whom, he says, he lived: John vi. 57. and whom he declares to be Greater than all. John x. 29. his virtuous Ambition, though leading to glorious effects, was yet of a far humbler nature, and engrossed all his attention, it was, as he asserts, To do the Will of Him that sent him, and to finish his work. John iv. 34.

It is very natural to believe that the Son is the last Being in the Universe who would wish to place himself, or covet to be placed on a *Level* with his God and Father Eternal, Whom he must reverence and love with Affection unspeakable: And if language such as the above will not satisfy us, concerning the great difference betwixt God and Christ, what form of sound words can be substituted to soften our Prejudices and clear our Understanding? Not one of the above texts, quoted or referred to, require the least straining to apply them. While these and the like passages remain in the Bible, it will be vain and absurd to charge the assertors of the Divine Unity with being obliged to fly to dark or forced constructions.

They

They have no need of Artifice. This very consideration is, in fact, the foundation of their comfort and peace. Contented with the simplicity of their Principles, supported by the plain and solemn declarations of Revelation; they may, without any ostentation, freely leave all *management* to Those who can venture to overlook or perplex the clearest Testimonies, if they happen to deny and resist the System which they have adopted.

It should be further observed of the foregoing scriptures, that by whatsoever means God was pleased to communicate his Will to his creatures in more distant Ages; it is certain with respect to us that, Christ is appointed our unchangeable Guide; that he is ordained *the Mediator between God and men*; our *great High Priest*; the *Messenger of the new Covenant* with the Earth. *For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*, Acts iv. 12. Notwithstanding these very Interesting circumstances, and the consideration of the great Authority with which Christ is Invested:—To raise him to any higher Dignity than his own declarations, or those of his Apostles, will upon the whole, clearly vindicate:—To place him on an *Equality* with the Deity, whose Ambassador he was, and from Whom he received all his Powers; is to diminish
the

the sacred Rights, and obscure the Glory of his Father and his God: It confounds the whole system of Revelation, and, consequently, greatly obstructs its effects. The permanent Honours and real merits of Christ, neither want nor can receive any addition, or heightening lustre from the extravagant attempts of men*: on the contrary, it may be feared that, the ill-judging Zeal of endeavouring to exalt the Nature of our Redeemer so much above what Reason and the Scriptures will fully justify, hath been, and is essentially injurious both to him and his doctrines. The two Dispensations, the Old and New Testament, were certainly given to destroy *Polytheism* in all its shapes: to infuse into Mankind a spirit of true Piety, and universal Benevolence: and, especially, to Establish the Worship of the One Lord God of the Universe, and to promote His Glory on Earth. For these great purposes was Christ himself given †. The Doctrine of the
Divine

* Our Saviour plainly manifested a readiness to admit the tokens of sincere Affection and Reverence, which are certainly due to him from all men; but he hath shewn that he is very far from being inclined to countenance any Ostentatious marks of Honour to himself; which savour too much of human frailty, and are not the fruits he expects from his Disciples.—
Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my FATHER who is in heaven. Matt. vii. 21.

† John vii. 18. viii. 50. xvii. 3, 4. 26. xviii. 37.

Divine Unity appears, therefore, of infinite Consequence. It is the Cause of God: It is the Cause of *Christ*: It is the Cause of every man who is warmed with any Gratitude to his Creator and Preserver, or has any proper Regard to himself.

Humbly bowing before the Throne of that SUPREME POWER to whom all things are possible, we shall not enter on any Argument for, or against the *Pre-existence* of our Great Master, who was so transcendent an Example of righteousness and humility: but in support of the *Momentous Cause* which is herein maintained, we shall endeavour to shew further from the same Records which have been our guide, the impossibility of his being *Equal* with God: (an Elevation he did not aspire to)—professing at the same time with great sincerity, that zealous love and reverence for our Redeemer which are due to him from every grateful and feeling heart*.

Without

* Supposing that *Christ* did *Pre-exist* in some glorious State; it by no means follows that he had *Supreme Dominion*, or that he was the *Creator*, as some have concluded. Such opinions are, indeed, utterly inconsistent with the Scripture doctrine, as they leave no room for his subsequent *Exaltation* and *Reward* for his Sufferings and Obedience here on Earth. See Dr. Lardner's *Posth. Discourses on Philip. ii. 5—11.* lately published, p. 33. An opportunity may be here taken to observe,

Without, therefore, pretending to dispute the Pre-existence of Christ; we shall observe that, Whatever may have been his nature and dignity before his appearance on Earth; *The Opinion of a Divine Nature Proper to him, and Equal, as it is commonly asserted, to the Father's*, is evidently inconsistent with the History of the Gospel, as must appear from what has been already produced. But, moreover, What occasion could there have been, *in that case*, to shed upon him, for the purposes of his Mission, the Extraordinary Gift of the holy Ghost;—upon him who *already* possessed Divine Wisdom and Power in the highest Degree? But no such inconsistency, is maintained in the Gospel: Our Lord evidently disclaims all such intrinsic Divinity, frequently declaring in plain words that he *derived* all his Powers from God

serve, once for all, that when, in the strong figurative language of the sacred Writers, *Christ* is called the Instrumental Creator of the Worlds, or rather *the ages*, &c. this, according to many learned and eminent Christians, means no more than his being the Founder of the *new moral or Christian Dispensation*; (called a *Creation unto good works*. Eph. ii. 10.) but has no relation to the Creation of the Universe. And those learned men appear to be right, for *God Himself* (or *the Father*) was most certainly the CREATOR; this we are early and justly taught even in our Catechisms; and, indeed, any other opinion flatly contradicts the express declarations of the Old and New Testament from beginning to end. See Gen. i. 1. vi. 7. Job xxxviii. throughout, Isa. xxxvii. 16. xlv. 24. xlv. 11, 12. 18.

Mark

*God his Father**, Whose unrivalled *Supremacy* he also proclaims in terms which cannot be mistaken. John x. 29. These truths we shall find Exemplified, if we pay attention to the circumstances of that interesting Event which closed his Mission. For, had he been possessed of *such* a Divine Nature, *Inherent* in himself; it will be granted by all, that, as it must have been absolutely *Inseparable* from him, so it would have been sufficient to have supported his *Human Nature* on all occasions whatsoever, as effectually as any Aid from another Power. He would not, therefore, have needed to be *strengthened by an Angel*, on a solemn occasion, and he certainly might have avoided the cruel Death, which he knew his Enemies were on the point of preparing for him, *without any applications to God*. Luke xxii. 41—44. Where would have been the Necessity or Propriety of *Praying* for help or relief which he did not *really want*? If it should be pretended (notwithstanding the supposition has no countenance in the text) that “Christ must be

Mark x. 6. xiii. 19. Acts iv. 24. 1 Cor. xii. 18. 24. Rev. xiv. 7, &c. Had there been more Creators than *One*, it is most probable that, “it would have been *signified* in the Works of Creation,” in some such manner, that Intelligent Creatures might have been apprized of it, for very obvious purposes.

* John vi. 57. xvii. 2. 22. 24. See texts N. † P. 61:

be understood here, to have only *Prayed* that he might be allowed to make use of the Power he had *in himself* to avoid his Enemies;" we answer, that a stronger circumstance cannot be produced to shew his *Dependence* on the Deity. Our Saviour was deeply affected by the approach of his Crucifixion, of which he had a quick sensibility; and if his Character, mild and humane as it is faithfully drawn, be properly considered, we can be but little surpris'd at this:—his benign and tender Spirit, though conscious of its glorious Victory over Death and the Grave, might yet be violently shaken by his reflections on that awful Scene, those piercing Sorrows, which he was just going to manifest to the World. So inexpressibly severe were these (which he foreknew) that he seems *at one time*, to have been anxiously desirous of escaping them, had it been consonant to the Will of the Supreme Being, to which he patiently resigned. Matt. xxvi. 39—44. Mark xiv. 34—42 *.

But

* A proper Attention to these and some other passages in the New Testament, will discover the weakness of the Hypothesis which *asserts*, that the *Father* and the *Son* possess but *one Will*: that they are and *were* united by an eternal and invariable Coincidence of an equal Intellect. Whence was this Doctrine derived? Such adventurous Metaphysics may sooth or amuse the Imagination, but the *fact* is contradicted by the plain Evidence of the Gospel.

But when he was traiterously apprehended,—far from referring on that pressing occasion to any *Divine Powers of his own*, by which he might easily have disappointed the merciless Jews, and at once have overwhelmed them and the Romans with confusion and destruction:—he says, with great calmness and simplicity to Peter, who had struck the servant of the high Priest,—*Put up again thy sword into its place.—Thinkest thou that I cannot now Pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of Angels?* Matt. xxvi. 52, 53. But, for ever revered be his Memory, unwilling to disappoint the great End of his Mission, he fulfils the *Prophecies**; submits with dignified Serenity to the sharpest stings of Ingratitude, Cruelty, and Ignorance, and meets Death itself, as an illustrious *Example* of the most perfect *Obedience*.

And surely the Value of this Obedience is greatly enhanced, by the very circumstance of his really experiencing the tenderest feelings of Humanity. For had his pure and righteous Spirit been *then* supported by any other helps than those of conscious Innocence and Integrity;—or rather, had he felt himself possessed of a *Power Divine and underived*, a Super-Angelic Nature

* Isa. liii. throughout. Luke xxiv. 25, 26.

Nature *Inseparable* from him, and which, in truth, must have raised him far above the fears and sorrowful Sensations of Human Nature,—in that case, half the Merit of his Afflictions would have been lost, and all his Agony little more than an *outward* Appearance. His patient Sufferings would have been no Pattern for *Us*, had he been upheld at that trying period, by such a *Conscious, Unborrowed, and Infinite Superiority*. But our Redeemer appears to have endured the whole Weight of his Calamities;—his pathetic Exclamation on the Cross, shews us that he missed the All-Powerful Assistance of his Father, at that moment when he was *to be made Perfect through Sufferings*. Heb. ii. 10 *.

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= Deeply

* It may be objected to the above arguments that they prove too much; as they might be urged to shew that, if Christ had any *Supernatural* Assistance (which it is confessed by all that he had) to support him during his Ministry; he still could not be properly, an *Example* to men who are without any such assistance. But this objection would be made without due consideration. For it should be remembered that our Lord had his *Religion to FOUND*. The Instruction and Salvation of the World were the vast Objects. It was, therefore, absolutely necessary that *he* (and his Apostles) should be endowed with *Supernatural* Powers, to attract the attention of mankind, and to prove his Divine Mission beyond controversy. But this Necessity can never again exist. The *Foundation is permanently laid*. Yet, the Followers of Christ are not left (as the above objection

Deeply affected as we must, and ever ought to be, at the remembrance of those unspeakable Sufferings, and warmed with ardent Love for *that good Shepherd who laid down his Life for Us*; still it may be proper to remind ourselves often that the glory of our Salvation even, is *ultimately* due to God; for had not his tender mercies to his creatures prevailed, Jesus Christ had never been sent on Earth. It was the *divine Will of the Almighty* that he should appear to instruct and save sinful Men*; *That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus*: Ephes. ii. 7: *Who was sent to deliver us from the Power of darkness*, that we might *serve the living and true God*; and to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light. (St. Paul.) Yet, beyond all doubt, the most unshaken reverence, united with fervent Love and Gratitude to this Great and ready Messenger, should be ever preserved; and

objection would imply) to struggle without hope of *any* of that *Divine Aid* which our Lord and his Apostles enjoyed. If men sincerely endeavour to deserve it, It is promised (and how inestimable the Privilege!) in such a measure as to enable any one to become as perfect a Disciple of our Saviour as is expected; and this is now amply sufficient.

* John iii. 16, 17. iv. 34. vi. 38. viii. 42. xvi. 5. Rom. v. 8. viii. 32. 1 John iv. 10, &c.

and a firm Faith in him * and his heavenly Doctrines; which, with a steady practice of them, is all he has desired or commanded.

Enough may have been said to support the opinion that Christ is not *God*, (in the proper sense of that sacred word) neither can possibly be *equal* with *God*, which is all that is here meant to be proved. And in doing this we are justified by the express declaration of our Saviour himself, *my Father is greater than I*. The Scriptures are, upon the whole, very clear in this respect. It may be satisfactory, however, on so important an occasion, to produce a further, and direct testimony of St. Paul, who, speaking of Christ to the Corinthians, has this remarkable expression, *Though he was crucified through weakness, yet he Liveth by the Power of God*. 2 Cor. xiii. 4. How is this passage to be reconciled to the received System? The words of the Apostle appear indeed to be decisive on the point before us. However, to prevent the usual objections to this conclusion; it may be here again observed that, had Christ possessed a Divine Nature, *Equal to the Father's*, it must have been perpetually *Inherent*; ever absolutely *Inseparable* from him;

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ever

* As *The Ambassador of Truth*. See John iii. 15. 16. 17. iv. 14. v. 24. viii. 28. 51. x. 9. xii. 48, 49, 50.

ever Present to sustain him : he could never then have been Crucified, as the Apostle says, *through weakness*, neither could he, with any possible consistency, be said to LIVE *by the Power of God*.

For it is apparent that, had he enjoyed such an Independent Divine Nature, he would have *Lived necessarily* ; and it is highly reasonable to think, that his inferior part would have been raised by his *own* Omnipotence, (and the fact specially recorded) without any Aid or Interference of the *Father* : the exertion of Whose mighty Power, (Eph. i. 19, 20.) where it was not really wanted, would appear nugatory, and unbecoming the divine Wisdom. This must be allowed by Those who, to solve the Difficulties which Scripture presents against their System ; so often insist on the *two* Natures *complete* in Christ, the *Divine* and *Human*. But they do not seem to reflect that, if they were pressed on this Article, they would find themselves driven to maintain that Jesus Christ is not *one*, but *two* Persons or intelligent Agents. This was the Doctrine of *Nestorius*, condemned and anathematized in the Council of Ephesus, at which more than 200 Bishops assisted*.

If

* See *Discourses* on the Divine Unity, by Mr. W. *Christie*, Jun. of Montrose, 1784. a valuable work, Clear, Learned, and Satisfactory. p. 83—87.

If the usual notion of these *two Natures* in Christ were authenticated in the New Testament, or found at all sufficient to clear away the perplexities which incessantly arise from placing him on *a level* with the *Father*, we might then be cautious how we refused to make use of a Key of such importance. But it is plain that, in the mode this doctrine is still offered to us, it is neither reconcileable to reason, nor to the Scriptures; as will be seen in what follows: and, therefore, although the hypothesis may be well intended, it cannot possibly have any good effect in the Issue*.

Some of the modern professors of Orthodoxy, as it is termed, though strenuous defenders of the doctrine of *two* infinitely different Natures in our Saviour, yet endeavour to steer clear of the rock on which Nestorius split; but their art doth not appear sufficient to save them from a gulf which immediately presents itself. These, therefore, in consonance with the council of Ephesus, will

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by

* Mr. Emlyn long since pointed out some dangerous consequences, which follow from the admission of this doctrine; as it seems too evidently to put *Equivocation* into the mouth of that Just One, whose Simplicity and regard to Truth were Unequaled. See *Discourses* on the Divine Unity, lately published at Montrose, p. 94—101. wherein a large quotation from Mr. Emlyn is given on this subject.

by no means allow that Christ is *two* Persons. "Christ," say they, "though consisting of two different natures, *viz.* the divine and human, is not two *persons*, but one divine *person*; the human nature, in him, not being a whole principle of action, but existing in the more perfect one. By the union of the divine and human nature *one Individual*, or whole is constituted; that is, *one Principle of acting*: for whatever *Christ's humanity* does, *that does his Divinity joined therewith.*" Now this Opinion involves us in consequences so totally inconsistent, that the notion of *Nestorius*, wild as it may be, yet appears the more reasonable of the two. For instance. According to the doctrine called Orthodox, (which supposes that this perfect union of the *two* Natures took place before Christ entered on his Ministry) it clearly and inevitably follows, that when Christ *Wept*, when he *Prayed for Assistance*, and when he exclaimed, during his *Sufferings*, that he was (rather, *feared* he was) *Forsaken*; his (supposed) Impassible and Omnipotent Nature, was *necessarily* and *Intimately* engaged in all these feelings and Actions!—not to mention others which, on this plan, would appear still more incongruous and shocking.

It is evident, from 2 Cor. xiii. 4. and from what has been said on that passage, that St. Paul had

no idea of this Hypothesis. We shall give another instance to shew it. If such a Divine Nature, *Equal with the Father's*, had been so inseparably united to the Human Nature of the blessed Jesus, or so mysteriously blended in him as to constitute *only one Person or Individual*; he surely then could not, *for a moment*, have been *made a little lower* (or Inferior) *than the Angels, for the suffering of Death*, Heb. ii. 9.—for superior Exaltation, or for any other purpose whatsoever. There would be equal consistency in supposing that the Almighty Father, for some important ends, could *have been made a little lower* than the works of His own hands! *

THERE

* The wisest and most unprejudiced men will, it is probable, think differently concerning the Nature of Christ. We truly believe it to be absolutely right, our duty and our interest, to think as Highly of our Lord as the Scriptures and Reason will justly permit. But manifest contradictions cannot be supported, and therefore certainly should have no place in Religion. It is peculiarly hard, that Inconsistencies and Impossibilities should be fastened on a Religion which, in itself, has them not. Those who are induced to believe the *Pre-existence* of Christ, will naturally conclude that, his *Pre-existent part*, (which they must suppose to have Animated *his body instead of a soul*) however Inferior to the Divine Being; however subject to the tenderest sensations; (and any *Inferior* Being, they may think, might possibly be liable to such) yet was not dissolved by Death, but, after his Crucifixion, must have been received into some place of rest, as many will conceive from Luke xxiii. 43. until it was, by the Power of God, reunited to his body the third day.

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THERE are, nevertheless, some few passages in Scripture (which we have no desire to avoid) that *seem*, on an hasty observation, to declare our Saviour and the Almighty God, *One*: as the following, which, because they appear the most express, we have thought proper to select, John x. 30. "*I and my Father are One.*" But it is plain from the context, that Christ meant not even here to confound his Person with that of his Father's, for, a few lines after he says he is "the Son of God." His *meaning*, therefore, will be more clearly discovered by inserting part of his affecting Prayer, in the 17th Chapter of the same Apostle; which is as follows:

Ver. 20. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*

That they ALL may be One; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be ONE in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

And

The Opposers of the Supremacy of the Great Parent of the Universe, will be pleased to consider that, they *themselves* have made such discussions as those above, concerning the Nature and Character of Christ, proper, so far as the Scriptures give us light, and, indeed, absolutely necessary for the discovery and support of the Truth. There is nothing further aimed at here.

And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be One, even as we are One.

I in them, and thou in me, that They may be made perfect in One, &c.

Now this *Unity* of the Disciples, their Converts, our Saviour, and the *Supreme Being*, is evidently *figurative*, and must mean no more than an union, or *Harmony*, in the Spiritual perfections of *Love, Beneficence and universal Charity*; and in the benevolent Design of imparting the most interesting Truths to mankind: for if we insist on the *literal* construction of the words, we shall confound all our ideas, and involve the Scriptures and ourselves in the grossest contradictions.

The like *Figures* of Speech, more or less heightened, are oft times used to express that intimate connexion, which necessarily subsisted between God and "*him whom he sent*;" but a little calm attention will enable us to discover their true signification, and reconcile them to the *Great Principle* * that enlightens the sacred Page throughout, which constitutes its everlasting support, and which the most elevated language therein was never designed to violate. For example, When our Saviour says, John xiv. 11. *Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works sake*, it is hardly necessary

to

* Deut. vi. 4. Mark xii. 29. Eph. iv. 6, &c.

to recur to a metaphorical sense to understand him. The words plainly allude to that necessary and special intercourse mentioned above; whence flowed all those Divine Instructions of our Lord, and whence all those wonderful works arose which he refers to, as sensible evidences of his communication with God.

I am in the Father.—intimating, *I am in concord with the Father*, that is, acting in perfect agreement to his Divine Will and Counsels. This construction is justified by the words of Christ himself. John viii. 28, 29. *I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.*

And the Father in me.—this expression is easily comprehended, for, in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, Col. ii. 9. or it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. Col. i. 19. That is, it pleased the Almighty, that his wisdom, power and benevolence, should shine conspicuously and fully, or competently, in Christ his sacred Messenger: who, faithful (Heb. iii. 2.) to him that appointed him, declares accordingly, the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works, John xiv. 10. and again, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. John vii. 16. For I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me
a Com-

*a Commandment, what I should say and what I should speak, John xii. 49.**

These very plain Declarations of our Lord that his Power, and his *Wisdom* also, were derived from the *Father*; will assist us in comprehending what is advanced in the famous passage, which introduces with great dignity, the Writings of the Apostle who records these declarations. By the *Logos*, or *the Word*, in the beginning of St. John's Gospel, the Divine *Wisdom* or *Reason* seems to be meant: (so it is pretty generally now understood.) namely, *the Wisdom of God, manifested to the World by His anointed Messenger, the Christ or Messiah, and residing in him for that purpose* †. This interpretation of a strongly figurative passage, appears to be in harmony with our Saviour's expressions above; and is, in all appearance, confirmed frequently, also by Christ himself, in the same Evangelist. For instance. John xiv. 24. *The Word (Doctrine) which ye hear, is not mine, but the Father's who sent me.* Here, in the Greek original, the same term, ὁ λόγος, *the Word*,

* In consequence of which, he very naturally says in another place, *ye believe in God, believe also in me.* John. xiv. 1. The purport of which is, indeed, explained sufficiently, Ibid. xii. 44. *He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on Him that sent me.*

† i. e. Such a Large Degree of the Divine *Wisdom* (and Power) was communicated to Christ, as enabled him to fulfil all the momentous purposes of his Mission.

Word, is used as in the beginning of this Gospel ; and in many other places where the *Doctrine* of Christ is plainly intended. Further, This solution of St. John's meaning is in perfect agreement with an ancient Prophecy, which directly points to the Messiah. *The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me ; (Moses) unto him ye shall hearken.—I (saith the Lord God) will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him.* Deut. xviii. 15. 18, 19. See Acts iii, 22, 23. It would be difficult to reconcile the Expressions in this Prophecy and those in St. John's Preface, to any other sense than that above offered : and, indeed, we find that the same Explication has been maintained by some of the best Commentators.

The Apostle says, (as is generally conceived) John i. 3. that, *by the Word were all things made that was made.* If he means here, as some imagine, that the *Universe* was made by the *Word*, and the *Word* was *the Son* ; then, must we not be obliged to confess that, the Theology of the *Platonists* seems, indeed, to be confirmed beyond a doubt.* Our *Creeds* must, in that case, be wrong,

* See N. † P. 45. and N. • P. 51. But, in reality, there is no sort of ground, as appears above, for the supposed coincidence

wrong, and serve only to mislead us: for they (as well as the general language of Scripture) positively ascribe the CREATION immediately to the *Father*, and not to the *Son*. That long established Creed, called the Apostles, (and even the Nicene) avers *the Father* to be *the Maker of Heaven and Earth*. They who composed that Creed, had reason in being afraid to give His most striking and affecting Glory to another. If, therefore, we do not understand the *Word* to mean here the *Father Almighty* or His own *Wisdom*, (which is ultimately the same) by which *He* formed and arranged the Universe, we throw the Scriptures and ourselves into the greatest confusion.† *He hath made the Earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by His discretion*, Jer. x. 10, 12. *Thus saith the LORD,—I am the LORD that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by MYSELF,*

coincidence of Plato's Doctrine, concerning *the Word*, and that of St. John. The writings of the Apostle sufficiently overthrow any such notion.

† Many, to explain the Exordium of St. John, have supposed that, by *the Word*, is there meant a *Subordinat*, or *Instrumental Creator* of All things, under the Supreme God. This is genuine *Platonism*. But the Idea appears so utterly incompatible with the general assertions of the Bible, which so peremptorily attribute the Creation of the Universe to the *Most High*, that we do not see how it can possibly be admitted.

MYSELF, Isa. xlv. 24. See Neh. ix 6. In short, if the *Father himself* was not *the Maker of all things*, the natural and almost universal Belief of Mankind must be false. But the meaning of the Apostle seems to be explained in his own writings: If we compare John i. 10, 11, 12. with John xvii. 25. and 1 John iii. 1.* the latter texts will discover WHO the Apostle, most probably, alludes to, when he says in the commencement of his Gospel, "He was in the World, and the World was made by him, and the World knew him not." &c. i. e. The *Father*, or His Divine *Wisdom* was manifested, in a most signal manner, to this part of His Creation; His sacred Light shining Eminently in His especial Messenger and Son Christ Jesus; yet, the gross and depraved faculties of men did not perceive it. John i. 5. In truth it is not a little surprising that men should indulge their Imaginations so far as to suppose the *Son* to be the *Creator*, since he himself has declared the very contrary, as we find in the records

mitted. See texts in N. * P. 78. to which may be here added Pf. cxxxvi. throughout. Proverbs iii. 19. The sacred Evidence is endless on this great Point. Now He who was our *Creator*, it is most just and natural to Believe, is our *constant Preserver*, and it is therefore as just and natural to Believe, that we must look up to HIM alone (Christ being our *Mediator and Guide*) for our *final* Destination and Happiness. Such easy deductions as these, arising directly from Revelation, are of intrinsic value to mankind, and render all the visionary and perplexing systems of the human mind, vain and unnecessary.

* See also Rev. iv. 8. 11. x. 6. xiv. 7.

records of St. Mark x. 6. xiii. 19. and also in St. Matt. xix. 4.*

Having made these short observations on a passage, which, from its ornamented mien, (and from the difference in opinion that seems unavoidable in men) has been the innocent occasion of much unhappy dispute; we shall just add: that although the *superior* and *special* Intercourse of the Supreme Being, and our blessed Guide, is generally

* An exemplary Confessor in the cause of Truth, has very judiciously observed that, "it would be highly extraordinary " that *Christ*" (as some will have it) " should be styled *the Word*, and also *God*, in the beginning of St. John's Book, " and that the Apostle should never afterwards give that " Title to Jesus, or call him *God* throughout his Gospel. " Again. *The Word* is considered as *God the Creator of all things*, at the commencement of the same Gospel; Whereas *Christ* is soon afterwards introduced declaring himself to " be dependent on God; subservient to His *Will* and *Commands*, and receiving Life and every thing from Him: " The same Jesus also asserting that *the Father* is the Only " true God, and, in short, acknowledging that he had the " same God and Father in common with the rest of the " human race, whom he calls his *Brethren*. (John xx. 17.) " Such contradictions, this Author remarks, no writer of a " sound Understanding can fall into." See Mr. Lindsey's *Catechist*. P. 39.—46. His sense is but briefly collected here.

The Title *Word of God* given to our Saviour, Rev. xix. 13. has a very easy Interpretation; he may be naturally so called, because God spake *through* or *by* him.

generally known and acknowledged; yet, this animating circumstance should not mislead us; should not incline us to forget the ever necessary distinction between the ALMIGHTY, and him to whom this divine communication was so *essential*. The most intimate connexion possible between the Deity and any other Being, can never put them on a level. We can understand this very readily on some occasions. Thus when St. John says of himself and other sincere Christians his companions, in his first Epistle, iv. 13. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him (in God) and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* We are at no loss here for the Apostle's meaning; strong as the expression is, we understand no more by it than a *spiritual communication* with God: and this also had our Redeemer, (who was, indeed, a *Prophet like unto Moses* *,) but with this glorious

* See the striking resemblance as it is drawn by Dr. Jortin, *Remarks on Eccles. Hist.* P. 202—225. Ed. 1751. Perhaps one of the strongest Proofs, to after Ages, (and well worth the serious attention of all men) that Jesus was truly the promised Great Prophet, or the *Messiah*, is, his indisputable and express *Prediction* of the destruction of Jerusalem, about forty Years before the event: and also of the *subsequent and lasting desolation of the Jewish State and People*. A People wonderfully preserved as a *standing Evidence* of the truth of the Prophecies of Christ. Luke xxi. 24. These are permanent Testimonies of his Divine Mission, open to the Eyes and Reflection of the World even unto this hour! See Dr. Jortin's *Remarks*, P. 20. and following pages, wherein this excellent man has shewn that

glorious difference, that *his* Intercourse was full, regular, and unparalleled. It may not be impertinent to observe of the last quoted passage of St. John, that he there plainly calls the holy Ghost, *God's Spirit*,—which Spirit, or *holy Influence*, being graciously transfused, by *God himself*, among the faithful disciples and followers of Christ, the Apostle, in this Epistle, distinguishes its happy effects, by declaring that it filleth all, who truly possess it, with the purest Benevolence and *Brotherly Love*.

We shall offer our humble opinion on one or two other texts, which appear to have been greatly misunderstood.

Since the Supreme Being Himself, or *His Person*, cannot possibly be *seen* by Mortal eyes; the most natural way of His manifesting his Will, his present Assistance, or his Designs to *men*; is, by a *Voice*, an *Impulse*, a *Symbol*, or by a *Representative* invested with extraordinary Powers.

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These

that these Predictions (as also those in the Old Testament, relating to Babylon and Tyre) “were *extant before* the Event.” When we apply to the *Bible*, and read the Prophecies concerning the destruction of Babylon, of Tyre, and of Jerusalem, and find in History, and in Fact, that those Prophecies have been *literally* Accomplished: surely herein the mind may find relief from the painful conflicts of Scepticism. Humbled in the dust, those once magnificent Abodes should be remembered by all, from age to age, as the awful Monuments of Truth and Power Irresistible.

These several methods He hath chosen. It follows, that the Scripture expressions, *God was manifest in the Flesh. God with us, &c.* should not be taken *literally*. The words, *God with us*, as they are meant *emphatically*, Matt. i. 23. must there imply *some Extraordinary manifestation of his WILL, and not of his PERSON*, which is *Invisible*: For as to the expression itself, *God with us*, to take it *literally*, or in a common acceptation, we all know that *God is with us* now, and with every part of the Universe *Eternally*, and therefore *His Presence* neither was, nor is confined to any particular spot, nor to any given time: This both Scripture and Reason demonstrate, and also justify the sense here put upon the text. Again. God may be said to be *manifest in the Flesh*, when any human Being is *especially* Commissioned by Him, and enabled *to do his Will, or work his works*, as in the instance of Moses, &c. This construction was familiar. It therefore seems wonderful that such oriental phrases as the above, should be laid hold of to prove Christ to be the *Most High God*; since if the (*revealed*) *Nature of the Deity* be at all considered*, they must have a very different sense; they must infer, that
Christ,

* Infinite, *Whom the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain!* 2 Chron. ii. 6. vi. 18. *Whom no man hath seen, nor can see.* 1 Tim. vi. 16. See also John v. 37. 1 John iv. 12.—The expression of our Saviour, addressed to the Jews of his time: John v. 37, is remarkable.

Christ, notwithstanding his very great Authority and Power, was, as St. Paul tells us, *the Image* (or *Representative*) of *the Invisible God*, Colossians i. 15, and, consequently, not *God himself**.

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In

* It should be mentioned that the text, "*God* was manifest in the flesh," has been disputed, as to the *authenticity* of the *first* word, by Sir Isaac Newton and others. Dr. Priestley says, (*Illustrations* of certain Scripture passages, P. 38.) "Sir Isaac Newton has fully demonstrated, that, in the original, this text was not, *God* was manifest in the flesh, but *who* was manifest in the flesh; and a very small alteration in the manner of writing Greek is sufficient for that purpose. The oldest Manuscript in the world, which I have examined myself, has been manifestly altered from the one to the other, as appears by the difference in the colour of the Ink." In addition to this, an unbiassed reader would consider the words which follow in 1 Tim. iii. 16. and judge whether it be probable that the apostle could mean to say that *God himself* was *received up into Glory*, &c.

The 1 John v. 20. has been selected by some to shew that *Jesus Christ* is there said to be *the true God*; notwithstanding the same *Jesus Christ* solemnly declares, John xvii. 3. that *the Father is the Only true God*. The words in 1 John v. 20, *this is the true God*, must, therefore, necessarily refer to *the Father*: (as many have observed)—For, if the *Son* be *the true God*, then who is *the Father*? Christ declares, that *the Father is the ONLY true God*: and the Apostle, say some men, asserts, that *Jesus Christ* (the Father's Messenger) is *the true God* also. Behold the force of Prejudice, which would set Christ and his Apostles at variance with each other!

No notice has been here taken of Philippians ii. 6, because that passage is generally allowed to be improperly translated, as, indeed, the context shews beyond controversy.

In reading the Scriptures, it is absolutely necessary for us to make great allowances for the free and bold effusions of the eastern Idiom. When St. Paul says to the Galatians, that "the Churches of Judea *Glorified God in him,*" Gal. i. 22. 24. we cannot, indeed, be in any danger, from the Expression, of mistaking the Apostle for God: but if *Christ* had happened to have made use of the same words, if we may judge from long experience, they certainly would have been insisted on, as a clear evidence of his proper Divinity, and as a Precedent of his right to all the honours of Religious Worship.

It would be mere repetition to dwell on the foregoing, and the like texts, some of which have been produced to favour the Athanasian hypothesis, since they have been so often and so clearly explained, and shewn to countenance no such Doctrine. And indeed how is it possible they should? how can we reasonably or *conscientiously* believe, that our great Master should overthrow, by his own discourses, the very *first Principles* he declares he was expressly sent to confirm or inculcate? namely, *the belief of ONE God, and his merciful Salvation of Mankind by his Messiah*.*

Clear

* "It stands upon record in his gospel, as the sum thereof, that he taught the worship of the Lord God (of heaven and earth

Clear as these articles of our faith appear, the opinions which have been, and still are, entertained of the *Person* of our Redeemer, are, unhappily, as various and inconsistent as upon any subject whatsoever: some persisting in defiance of the plainest evidence; to affirm *that he must be Almighty God himself**; which utterly “destroys

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“his

earth) and of him only; and that to know him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he sent, was eternal life.”——Bishop Chandler’s Defence of Christianity from the Prophecies, 2 Ed. Page 301.

Those mysterious Doctrines which have been sometimes called the *Distinguishing Doctrines of Christianity*, do not, in fact, appear to belong to it.

* If John the Baptist had thought *Christ* to be *God*, he hardly would have said that, *God giveth not the Spirit by measure* unto Christ, John iii. 34. Neither is it probable that the Apostle John would have recorded such an expression, if he had believed Christ to be *God*, see Heb. i. 1, 2. *Christ* speaking to the Jews of his day, says, that, “*they had neither heard the Voice of God (or the Father) at any time, nor seen his shape.*” John v. 37.

St. Paul informs us that our Redeemer “passed into the “Heavens, where he remains at the right hand of God our “constant *Mediator* and *Intercessor*.” Rom. viii. 34. Heb. iv. 14. ix. 15. 24, &c. Moreover, he is called the *Apostle* and *High Priest of our Profession*. Heb. iii. 1. x. 21. and in Luke xiii. 33. he styles himself a *Prophet*. Titles all incompatible with his being *God*. As are likewise his following denominations; *The first-born of every Creature*. Col. i. 15. *The beginning of the Creation of God*. Rev. iii. 14.

It may be requisite to observe, that, although we do not suppose the MEDIATION of Christ can render the Supreme Being

“ his Office and Character of *Mediator*,” and flatly contradicts his own express declarations*: whilst many have lowered him to the other extreme, maintaining him to have been only a great and virtuous *Man*†. We shall not attempt to reconcile

Being *more* placable, or *more* Merciful to his Creatures than He ever was, and ever will be; yet, since it is a *Means* that He has been pleased to *Ordain*, doubtless for most gracious ends; it becomes our Duty and our Interest, as Disciples of Christ, to acquiesce with humility in this Dispensation, and to be earnestly desirous of its benefits, whatever they may be.

Part of his Mediatorial Office seems to consist (according to Dr. Prideaux) in the solemn and general Offering of the Prayers of his Disciples (preferred in his Name) to God. In which he may be considered as our *Higb Priest*, as well as Mediator. See Rev. viii. 3, 4. with Prideaux's explanation of this text, referred to, Note * next Page.

* See Matt. xi. 25, 26. John v. 31, 32. 36, 37. The contradictions and absurdities which follow on the above *Opinion*, (that Christ is God) have been so often pointed out, that it is painful to be obliged to multiply such observations. It is making him *at the same time* the *Principal* and the *Messenger*:—*Sent* by God (as he so frequently declares) and yet God *himself*; it supposes him to Pray to *himself*, to call upon *himself* for Aid, &c. See John xvii. throughout. Heb. v. 7, 8, &c.

† A *mere* man is here intended; one not endued with any *supernatural* Powers. Thus many held Christ to have been only a great and wise Philosopher; acknowledging the singular beauty and strength of his doctrines, but presumptuously discrediting all Miracles *whatsoever*, supposing them utterly inconsistent and impossible.

reconcile Opinions so widely different; but must here again confess our surprise, with respect to the *first*. Although it is asserted in Scripture, and appears from Analogy consonant to Reason, that there are progressive classes of Celestial Beings, excelling each other in degrees of Dignity, Power and Knowledge, inconceivable by us;—yet we find *many* Men are not contented that the blessed Person above should be *only* the *Son* of God; (as he is denominated in Scripture) next in Glory and Power to the Almighty himself; Elevated *for his perfect Obedience*, above the most exalted Hierarchies! Phil. ii. 8, 9.—*Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the Oil of Gladness above thy fellows.* Heb. i. 9*.—but, dissatisfied with his Greatness

* Without diminishing our just Ideas of his Exaltation, we may conceive that the distance between him and the MOST HIGH may be still Immense. The words quoted above, lead us forcibly to this conclusion.

There are doubtless many, who from some expressions in the Gospels, think themselves supported in their Belief of the *Pre-existence* of Christ: but while they (it may be justly) believe his *Pre-existence*, and contemplate with joy his glorious *Exaltation*, it by no means follows that they would place him on an *Equality* with the Divine Being,—with *his God and our God*: such a conclusion would ever appear unwarrantable and irrational. Neither surely can they with sufficient safety make him (as is done) an equal Object of Religious Adoration; since their sacred Records teach them, and he their Great Master
(whose

Greatness in this unspeakable *Exaltation*, they must either believe him to be *even* the MOST HIGH, or give up all confidence in his Power, or faith in his Doctrines. From which Opinion it would follow, that the SUPREME, the All-glorious LORD and *Creator* of the Universe; on Whom the very Being of All things *Incessantly* depends; Who filleth Heaven and Earth *eternally* with his Presence, and Whose mode of Existence and Nature are absolutely *Unchangeable* and *Impassible*; or, as St. Paul expresses himself, *Who only* (in a strict and proper sense) *hath Immortality*; was, nevertheless, not only really or *Personally Imbodied* in a human Frame, but, moreover, made a *Sacrifice*,
by

(whose Example we are directed to follow) hath *shewed* them that *Divine Worship* is the *distinguishing* and *peculiar* Honour, due from *All* to our Father who is in heaven: and, indeed is the *ONLY* proper means we have to *distinguish* Him from all other Beings.

From some Passages in Scripture, several worthy and learned Men seem to have thought that *Christ* might have been the Archangel Michael *incarnate*. (Dan. x. 21. Ib. xii. 1. Acts xxvii. 23. compare with Gal. iv. 14. Here the Apostle evidently speaks of Christ as an *Angel* or *Messenger of God*. 1 Thess. iv. 16.) See Prideaux's *Connexion*, Edit. 8. vol. i. page 383, who calls him the *Angel of the Covenant*. And Bishop Law's *Considerations*, 5th Edition, Note † Page 85. Notwithstanding, (as those excellent Persons would undoubtedly agree,) it seems more satisfactory (even if their conjecture should be true) to adhere to the Gospel definition, which styles him the *only begotten Son of God*; a glorious and *pointed Title*, which sufficiently discriminates him.

by violent bands, for the most corrupt and insignificant of His intellectual *Creatures*:—*Himself* a Sacrifice to appease *Himself*! *

Will not some Men yet see and acknowledge the *Impossibility* that the *God of Nature* should *Suffer*, should *Expire*, without *All Nature* Suffering, and instantly *Perishing* with Him?

No Inferior Oblation, however, it has been said, would have been at all Adequate. It is much to be feared that such tenets, to say nothing worse of them, expose our extreme vanity and Presumption, rather than demonstrate our attachment to sound Religion, or our attention to the voice of that Reason with which God hath been pleased to endue us.

St. Peter seems to have intended to guard us from these errors and perplexities, by recording with great clearness and simplicity, and in few words, the nature and final purpose of our Saviour's Mission and Doctrine, and his *dependence* on

* Those who believe *Christ* to be the *Most High God*, will probably, apply to his (supposed) *two* Natures, in order to explain the above Inconsistencies. But then the former Difficulty returns. It appears that, *Two* complete (Intelligent) Natures, must necessarily imply *Two* distinct Persons, or Intelligent Agents. *Nestorianism*. See this well illustrated by Mr. Christie, in his *Discourses* (before referred to) P. 82—89.

on the Deity. That *he verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the World, but was manifest in these last times for you; Who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.*
 1 Peter i. 20, 21.

Whatsoever Rank and Power our great Deliverer may now hold in the Universe, it is plain, therefore, that he possesses them in *subordination* to that *Lord God Omnipotent*, from *Whom* he himself declares *he received all things.* Matt. xi. 27. John xvii. 7. Moreover his present Authority and *Spiritual Ministry* we learn are held for a *determined Period*; for it is written that he is at last to *deliver them up to their Almighty Giver, even to the Father; that God may be all in all.*—1 Cor. xv. 24. 27, 28.*

This important circumstance, which is asserted by St. Paul with great solemnity, is surely sufficient of itself to shew the *Inequality* between Christ and *the Supreme Lord of Heaven and Earth.* Nevertheless, the ingenuous and unprejudiced Reader will not consider what has been educed as a design to diminish the real Dignity and excellence

* “ Although we must always suppose, that he will for ever “ possess a reward, suitable to his distinguished merit and “ obedience.” Mr. Christie’s *Discourses*. P. 105.

lence of our Illustrious and beloved Redeemer: far from so impotent, so dangerous an attempt, it is meant to shew no more than our Saviour himself and his Apostles also have forcibly impressed; —that the Power and Authority of our *Great Creator* are *alone* UNDERIVED and IMMUTABLE; his Glory and Benevolence UNEQUALLED; his Dominion UNBOUNDED and ETERNAL.

By inculcating these great Truths, our Saviour, and his inspired Followers, clearly pointed out the Object of Adoration, and strictly adhered to all the preceding Revelations which regarded the Deity, as it is natural to conclude they would. The *external* modes of Worship may be altered or relinquished, as we find they have been by Divine authority, but the *proper Object* of Religious Worship must *for ever* be the *Same*. The *One* only God who was acknowledged and adored by Moses and the Prophets, must be the very God of the Christians:—there can be no possible Change in a Being absolutely *Immutable*. Neither can it be said with any colour from the Scriptures, nor with any semblance of Reason that, God (or the Object of Adoration) was revealed to Moses and the Prophets *Imperfectly* or *Incompletely*. What appearance of verity is there, that the *Almighty* on that awful occasion, when He proclaimed the true *Object* of Divine Worship, *Exod. xx.* and spake of Himself as a *single Being*

or

or *Person*, and *Lord of All*, (xix. 5.) did thereby conceal from his faithful Servants the Essential knowledge of his intimate Union with *two other* Divine Persons, *Equal* with *Himself* in *Perfection*, *Dominion*, and *Power*; and consequently, equally entitled to the Worship and *Marked* attention of All Mankind in all Ages?—Surely the Spirit of that man must be waxed gross, that doth not tremble at the Ideas which even the Mention of such opinions unavoidably suggests.

It is therefore, exceedingly wonderful how any such opinions should ever have maintained a firm hold in the minds of serious and intelligent men. If we collect again (and it cannot be done too often on this occasion) a few of the plain and emphatical Expressions of the Old Testament, and likewise some of the New, their united force may, possibly, demonstrate the difficulty and danger that we throw ourselves into, when we depart, in any manner, from our obedience to such solemn Injunctions; in which, it is evident, no more than *One Divine Person* is spoken of. *I am the LORD your God.*—*There is none like ME.*—*Thou shalt worship no other God.*—*The LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords.*—*He is thy praise, and He is thy God.*—*Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, Him shalt thou serve, and to Him shalt thou cleave, and swear by His name. He that sacrificeth unto any God, save unto the Lord ONLY, he shall be utterly destroyed.*—And if ye will
not

not for all this hearken unto Me, but walk contrary unto Me; Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. Again. I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear HIM who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear HIM.*—For my Father is greater than I.—My Father is greater than All.—Why callest thou me good? none is good, save One, that is, God.—And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy Mind This is the first and great Commandment.—When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.—The hour cometh, and now is, when the True Worshipers shall worship THE FATHER in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship HIM.

Here is a minute assemblage of the Declarations and Precepts of God, of Moses, and of Christ. They are in exact harmony, and as perfectly clear as harmonious: but it appears altogether impossible that they should ever be properly reconciled with the Athanasian doctrine: the very attempt to do it, leads us into dangerous perversions, and fills

* The One law-giver, who is able to save, and to destroy.
James iv. 12.

fills us with the most distressing perplexity. It would be well, therefore, if men whose Minds are illumined with true Wisdom, and who, on mature reflection, feel no Danger in the *received* Doctrine, when it is fairly discussed before the impartial Tribunal of Scripture and sound Reason;—it would be perfectly congenial with Christian Charity, if they would with temper and perspicuity reconcile, if it be possible, the hitherto insuperable Difficulties found in *that* Doctrine, which have, for Ages, shaken the tranquillity and the Belief of Multitudes; (and from which the Unitarian faith is, at least comparatively, *Free*)—that the spirits of those who are anxious to hold the Truth in righteousness may be in Peace.

Upon the whole. It appears from the *general* construction of the *Scriptures* that the Lord our God is *absolutely One*. That what is *therein* termed, the *Holy Ghost*, means *no less* than the *Extraordinary* Emanations, or the *Effective Power*, of God's *own* Almighty Spirit, proceeding *immediately* from *Him**; and in the Gospel times, for glorious purposes, communicating the most precious Gifts to Christ and his Apostles||:—*Virtue* ineffable

* See Luke xi. 13. John xv. 26. Acts viii. 19, 20. 1 Cor. vi. 19.

|| Our Saviour after his *Ascension*, is declared to have dispensed these divine gifts to his faithful Followers on Earth: *having*

ble of the HIGHEST ! which pervades the Universe, and *aets continually* all around Us, though, perhaps, but seldom *perceptibly* within us. *That this Supreme and most Holy LORD GOD, is the Only proper Object of all religious Adoration; and that we are directed to Pray and give Thanks to Him alone, through the mediation and in the Name of our blessed Redeemer and Master Jesus Christ.*

That this was the habitual Practice of the Apostles and their *immediate* Disciples is most evident throughout the New Testament †, and indeed was
directly

ing then again received the Power of so doing from the FATHER. Acts ii. 33. —being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. See also Luke xxiv. 49. John xiv. 16. This again shews in Whom those wonderful Powers Originate. We therefore very properly address our Prayers to God (through Christ) for all such Spiritual Assistances, (though now of a very inferior kind) and not to Christ who acts under Him. That the Spirit which actuated Christ, is still, ultimately, under the direction of God, see Gal. iv. 6.

† And it appears to have been the general practice for a long period after the first preaching of the Gospel. *Justin Martyr*, about an hundred years after Christ, declares, “ that there was no nation of men, whether Greeks or Barbarians, who had not learned to offer prayers and thanksgivings *to the Father and Maker of all, in the Name of Jesus who was crucified.*” *Dr. Fleetwood’s Life of Christ*, Intro. P. 32. And certainly nothing can be more Distinguishing, more Glorious, and truly Honourable to our Redeemer, than this Practice of making a solemn
use

directly encouraged by our Saviour himself, in his final Instructions. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my Name: * ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.* John xvi. 23, 24. xv. 16. The positive directions of St. Paul, accordingly run as follows, and are so clear that they cannot be misunderstood.

In every thing by Prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. Phil. iv. 6.

Giving thanks always for all things unto God even the Father, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Eph. v. 20.

Whatsoever

use of his *Name*, in all our addresses to Almighty God; *Which is indeed a proper and just acknowledgment of the PRE-EMINENCE of Christ* above all other Beings, *God himself wholly Excepted.* This is the Divinity which, as the Scriptures represent to us our Lord Jesus Christ most worthily enjoys; even that Elevation and Glory which his God and Father was pleased to confer upon him, and which were *Preordained* for his matchless Purity and Obedience: and the *Exaltation*, as has been said, is unspeakable. These Principles, if maturely weighed, would go a great way towards satisfying the scruples of many.

* *HITHERTO have ye asked nothing in MY name, and again, Ib. ver. 23. In that day ye shall ask ME nothing.—Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, &c.* These words of Christ to his devout Followers, contain fresh evidence that *he* cannot be
God,

Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Col. iii. 17.

That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Rom. xv. 6 *.

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What

God, cannot be equal to the Father: If he were, neither of these Declarations could have been made. Surely, of all others, the Unitarian Faith is the least necessitated to screen itself under *Perversions* of the sacred Text.

* See also John xiv. 13. Acts xii. 5. Ib. xxiv. 14. Rom. i. 8, 9. Ib. x. 1. Ib. xvi. 27. 1 Cor. i. 4. Ib. xiv. 25. 2 Cor. i. 3. Eph. iii. 14. Philip. iv. 20. Col. i. 3. 12. 1 Thess. i. 2. Ib. ii. 13. Ib. v. 23. 2 Tim. i. 3. 1 Peter ii. 5. &c. It may be here reasonably asked, How doth it happen, that in all these Examples and solemn directions for *Prayer* and *Thanksgiving*, (and in many others which might be produced) *God the Father* is alone supplicated and adored? the *Holy Ghost* is not once mentioned. Why is this *distinct* Divinity thus entirely omitted? The answer is indeed, short and plain. *Christ* and his *Apostles* it appears never thought of distinguishing *positively* God's holy Spirit from God *himself*.

In some forms like the above, mention is indeed made of the *Spirit*, as in Rom. xv. 30. Philip. iii. 3. but, it is remarkable, *never* as a *distinct* Object of Prayer or Thanksgiving. The words Πνευμα αγιον, or *holy Spirit*, seem therefore, to have been often used by our Saviour and his Apostles, as a *comprehensive* mode of expressing the divine communications of *God*, (who is consequently always understood) *His* power, influence, grace, and various *spiritual* gifts, being all frequently implied in that Scripture-phrase.

After

What form of words can possibly be more full or declarative? How therefore, the same *truly Orthodox* mode of Worship could injure the very same Religion *now*, it is hard to conceive. These
Precepts

After all : should we Suppose the utmost, (how far soever it may be from according with the *general* Principle of the Bible) that by the *Holy Ghost* is really meant, a *mighty Spiritual Being*, sent, John xiv. 16. 26. or employed by the most High God, (or even acting *with* Him) yet there is *no Precedent whatsoever* (that we can discover) *throughout the New Testament* for the *invoking*, or *giving Glory* to such *distinct* Agent.

St. Luke has recorded a Form of Glorification or Praise, offered to the Deity by the *Angels* or *heavenly host*. Luke ii. 13, 14. *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, &c.* As this Form is allowed to be genuine, it is difficult to account Why men have not followed so secure an Example : since those *Celestial Beings* certainly must have known precisely what is right on such occasions ; and the instance they gave was momentous, because this *heavenly Doxology* was uttered on a memorable occasion, and in the hearing of men.

In fine. That which seems further to confirm the necessity of considering the *Holy Ghost* as no other than the Spirit or *Power* of the *Almighty himself*, is, the declaration made by *St. Matthew* i. 18. 20. and likewise by *St. Luke* i. 35. *that our Saviour was born of the Virgin by the Holy Ghost.* Now if the *Holy Ghost* were *not* the *Power of the Highest*, but the *Third Person* of a *Trinity*, *distinct* or *different* from the *Father* ; then would *Christ* be rather the *Son* of the *Third Person*, and not of the *Father*, who is the *First*. But he is generally called the *Son of God the Father* in the *Scriptures*, even with respect to his *Humanity*, and *never* of the *Holy Ghost*. When he is spoken of as the *Son of Man*, it naturally refers to his *Mother's* lineage from the *House of David*.

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Precepts of the Apostle are, indeed, utterly incompatible with the notion that *Christ* is the Most High God; but they are no other than the conclusive Directions of our Saviour himself; and are free from all perplexity or uncertainty. If we deviate from them in the least, we then wander from the Path which is so benevolently and directly pointed out to us, and enlightened by the clearest rays from heaven.

We are therefore, humbly of opinion, that if our Doctrines were reduced to their *original* Purity and Simplicity; did we freely and unequivocally acknowledge with the Apostle, *that the head of Christ is God*: 1 Cor. xi. 3.—these necessary and important steps would, in a great measure, destroy our most bitter Controversies; render our holy Religion more generally understood and believed; and prepare it for that *Universal* Promulgation and Acceptance, for which it was so benevolently intended by its Great and Blessed Teacher:—and which, (as it has been long foretold) in Defiance of the subtlest powers of Darkness and Delusion, will finally be Accomplished.

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Let it be remembered that this *latter* Argument is drawn from those peremptory *distinctions* which have been made by *others*.—The design here is serious and Important.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the Works of Darknes, and let us put on the armour of Light. Rom. xiii. 12.

Praying with the Apostle: *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Him. Eph. i. 17.*

Then shall we, happily for ourselves, hasten the fulfilling of that ancient Prophecy: *And the LORD shall be King over all the Earth: in that day shall there be ONE LORD, and his NAME ONE. Zech. xiv. 9.*

To Whom be Glory in the Highest, through Jesus Christ. *Amen and Amen.*

THE writer of this treatise wishes not to place any improper confidence in his own opinions; but he thinks that he may very safely make the following declaration. If the maintainers of the Athanasian Doctrine, and the Worship adapted to it, can produce from the Scriptures, Testimonies as CLEAR and PLAIN, in support of that Doctrine and Worship, as, it is humbly conceived, are herein produced, from those sacred records, in direct confirmation of the DIVINE UNITY and the Worship Consequent thereon; (and enjoined by Christ himself)—then the author is most ready and willing to acknowledge his errors or oversight. But let it be observed, as a Preliminary not to be abandoned, that, the many texts which declare the positive Unity of God are so simple and incontrovertible, that they require no Comment or Explanation whatsoever*: They are, at first view, equally obvious to the Learned and the Unlearned; an Advantage which the most common understanding must perceive; and which, indeed, when considered, will unavoidably render all forced or mysterious deductions from other parts of Scripture, to prove a different doctrine, Suspicious and Inconsistent.

The writer goes upon the simple Principle that the Clearest Evidence is the safest to depend on; and that such Evidence rises in its value and moment in proportion to the Importance of the Cause it supports. If any, however, should suppose that he would turn a deaf ear to distinct and solid reasoning, supported by plain Scripture, against his opinions; they would be utterly mistaken. As he truly proposes to himself no other end than a satisfactory discovery of the most interesting of all Truths, he is not likely to hazard his future quiet by obstinately defending unscriptural or fallacious arguments. The candid, and those who have given any serious attention to the Subject, are requested to take notice of this appeal.

* For the truth of this, the reader is referred to the Scripture citations which appear in P. 22, 23. 27, 28. 110, 111. and in many other places throughout this little work. Is it possible that testimonies like those, i. e. equal in Number and Perspicuity, should be produced from the Bible, in favour of the Athanasian or Trinitarian System?

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A
L E T T E R

FROM THE

A U T H O R,

TO HIS GRACE

J O H N

Lord Archbishop of CANTERBURY.

Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth ME, that I am the LORD.—Jeremiah ix: 24.

Ille vero (Christus) exhibuit Deo fidem. Docuit enim quod Unus Deus sit, eumque Solum coli oportere: nec unquam se ipse Deum dixit: quia non servasset fidem, si missus, ut Deos tolleretur, et unum assereret, induceret alium præter Unum.

LaBantius de vera sapientia;

SECOND EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS.

LETTER

FROM THE

AUTHOR

TO HIS GRACE

JOHN

Lord Archbishop of Canterbury

The first part of this letter is a letter to the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, and the second part is a letter to the Lord Bishop of London.

The first part of this letter is a letter to the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, and the second part is a letter to the Lord Bishop of London.

SECOND PART. A LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

TO HIS GRACE

J O H N

Lord Archbishop of CANTERBURY.

MY LORD,

ALTHOUGH the Principles, contained in my Endeavour to Elucidate the *Unity of God*, are opposed to a long prevailing Opinion in the Church over which you Preside; yet, I humbly presume, your Grace has not determined to refuse your attention to Arguments, that are seriously and temperately offered against that Opinion, especially when they are fairly brought from those very Records on which it is supposed to be founded. The Respect I feel for your sacred Function, secures me from giving you the least Intentional Offence. I have no Symptoms of such a design in my heart. And, therefore, I
flatter

flatter myself, that you will believe me, my Lord, when I declare, that nothing but an earnest desire to support the Truth, on an Article of the utmost Importance to Mankind, (in doing which I have taken Example from *very high Authority*) and to shew the agreement of Scripture to that Light which God himself implanted in us, hath prompted me to open myself to your Grace and to the world. I have thus discharged, what I have conceived to be, my Duty; and the issue is cheerfully resigned to Providence.

It will appear evident, I hope, to every unbiassed Mind, that the tract foregoing, contains not a presumptuous attempt to injure or to alter any part of the Religion of Christ, but that it is expressly designed to forward its GENERAL reception on its own Foundations; and to secure that Union and Peace in the Church, which are alone to be expected from a *strict* adherence to the revealed Will of God. The leading Principles maintained in that Tract, and in some other late Publications, are taken from no mortal Source; and they will, I believe, be found to include the very means by which the Christian Faith may be reduced to its primeval simplicity; relieved from confusion; and defended effectually from the shrewd objections of many of its Adversaries.

I beg

I beg leave to observe, that the zealous Inquirers into the true Object of Divine Worship, are sometimes, very irrationally, accused of an overweening Curiosity: it is said, that they do wrong in disturbing the Minds of themselves and others, by searching into Mysteries which are not on a level with our Understanding. Now without entering into any formal argument against this reasoning, a very plain answer may be given. That, if we would settle our Faith on substantial grounds, we must both *Search* and *Think*: and that when those Mysteries are perpetually brought forward in the Church, and warmly defended out of it, not as points merely Speculative, but, as Articles of *Belief* necessary to Salvation, we very naturally endeavour to comprehend them; and indeed they then become of too Important a nature to suffer the truly Religious Mind to remain Indifferent about them. Thus Men are unavoidably driven, if they regard their inward quiet, to seek for satisfaction to themselves; and to take refuge from the distractions of Controversy, under the peaceful safeguard of the Bible. What we have reason to lament, is, that the sacred writings have been violently wrested into mystic senses, which very often have no place but in the Imagination; and favourite Opinions have been defended, without any due regard to the allowed signification

cation of words, to Grammar, or the general design of the Scriptures.

As such irregular modes of construction are never likely to fix our Religious Principles on a firm basis, I have endeavoured to confine myself to the most obvious Sense of Revelation, and it is my consolation, that I can humbly and openly appeal to the Great Judge of All, that if I have erred in the search of Him and his Truths, I have not erred *Wilfully*. I could not possibly have sought my own Interest in so doing. In designedly trying to mislead others, I should certainly undermine my own tranquillity, without the smallest prospect of advantage; and surely no man of common sense will be charged with such consummate folly. The Point I have contended for, is, indeed, of such infinite Importance, that, I readily own, I found myself unable, in the prosecution of my endeavours, to free myself from the deepest anxiety and fear, lest I should grossly err, and give offence in a matter wherein my future Peace and Happiness are so directly concerned. But I humbly rely on the Mercy and Compassion of God, in whom I have trusted and not in myself.

Conscientious motives prevailed on me not to conceal the result of my inquiries. To free others from Perplexity, as well as myself, and to prove
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by clear deductions, that the Bible doth not enforce an article of Faith repugnant to our inward suggestions, but that It is filled with confirmations of that first Principle, *the Unity of God*, which appears to be a Truth harmonizing with human Reason:—These have been my chief wishes and designs. Yet I am convinced, my Lord, with yourself and others, that even the steadfast Belief of this Great and leading Principle, and the consequences deducible from it, will avail us but little, unless the Moral excellencies, which should arise from that Belief, are put in Practice. True Charity, Piety, Virtue, Integrity, are essentials in true Religion, and the stipulated means of our acceptance with God.

THE History of Europe, as your Lordship well knows, records the most melancholy Proofs how far Men, in support of their several Systems, have departed from Christian Charity. Human Nature shudders at the Relation, and is relieved alone by reflecting on that Light and Liberality which, by the favour of God, now pervade and Dignify the Minds of Men almost throughout Christendom.

The Maxim which so long prevailed, that the Gift of God, our *distinguishing Faculty*, is a Guide by no means to be trusted in our Religious researches;

searches;—this fatal notion, craftily taught, and too readily imbibed in Superstitious Ages, dethroned *Reason*; and the Blessings and Promises of the Gospel were then secreted in the hands of Tyranny, or consigned to the blind and merciless Authority of *Zeal without Knowledge*.

These interested endeavours to shut out the light of Reason, or to render it useless, in a great measure succeeded; and, in consequence, an almost universal Darkness overspread the Christian World; which has dissipated but by slow degrees. Surprising as it may appear on reflection to some, it seems to have been but lately allowed that, a Man can neither, in fact, be *compelled to Believe*, nor can possibly *Believe as he pleases*; but that, if he Thinks at all, *his real Belief must flow from the dictates of his own Conscience*; a Tribunal which no Mortal Power can command! This is an everlasting *Truth*; and it is from Mens Ignorance of it, or their want of attention to it, that all the shameful Cruelties of Persecution, on account of Religious opinions, have ever taken their rise. It is not possible for *Ignorance* to expose itself more ridiculously, than in manifesting a Belief, that any human Authority can *Force the Consciences* of Men, since it certainly is not in the power of themselves to do it if they would. Whenever, therefore, this has been attempted, (as it has been
too

too often) the Tryal has universally ended as all tryals must do that are made to effect Impossibilities. But Mankind as they become more enlightened, become not only more reasonable, but, very naturally, more Merciful also; and those Enormities which were formerly committed by Bigots of all Persuasions, and which we now read of with equal horror and astonishment, are never likely, by the Goodness of God, to infect the Earth again.

The Powers of Conscience may indeed be suppressed by Tyranny for a time, but cannot be *finally* subdued. We may smother the Flame without extinguishing the Fire. When that Excellent Man, Archbishop *Cranmer*, harrassed by his merciless enemies, and overcome by the weakness of human Nature, signed an Abjuration of those Principles which Reason and Reflection had taught him to adopt; how little did the Terrors of the bitterest Cruelty and misguided Zeal at last Avail? At the instant of his Death, what an affecting and glorious Example did he give of the Triumph of Conscience over All!

Thus much I will venture to predict. That in whatsoever Christian Country, the People shall be indulged without exception, in the Free Exercise

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of their *Religious* Principles *;—in the practice of *such* as they themselves, after a calm and serious Inquiry, shall *Believe* to be inculcated in the Sacred Dispensations; *that* Country will be the *First* (and Great-Britain bids fair for it) that will be permanently settled on the Firm Basis of the *Gospel* and Reason. All material deviations will purge themselves by degrees, or be soon expunged by the unshackled Efforts of serious and attentive Minds: whereas Restraint and Persecution of all kinds, Experience has taught us, serve only to inflame Prejudices and Fix them, and to render even Contradictions and Absurdities Sacred.

Yet, my Lord, I am *very far* from being unfriendly to an *Established* Form of Worship; I conceive it hardly possible for Society to subsist without it. I believe it to be absolutely essential to the Welfare and Peace of the World, and full of general Utility; Provided that, the fundamental Principles of this Establishment are grounded Solely and Clearly on the *Scriptures*. For the generality of Men have neither Ability, Leisure, nor (it is to be feared in many instances) Inclination to plan for themselves any rational and well-adapted

* This observation is positively restricted to *Religious* Principles; purely and conscientiously *such*, i. e. *such* as are, in themselves, abstracted from any worldly or Political motives whatsoever.

ed Form of Religious Worship : and the Positive Necessity of preserving a constant and well-ordered Attention to the ALMIGHTY, must be obvious to All Mankind ; as it most certainly is, and must for ever be, the object of Highest concern to all rational Beings. Still there is no sort of necessity to *Constrain* men to join in any particular Mode of Worship whatsoever : this is much better left freely to their own Consciences, to that inextinguishable Light of God which is placed in the breast of every man ; and we may rest *assured*, that the Form which is found by Experience to be the Clearest, the most Rational, and, especially, the most consonant to the plain Doctrines of the Scriptures, will at length prevail over all others ; and be *Directly* and *Cordially* embraced by all those who are truly Pious, Discerning, and Learned :--- and it is well enough known what effect this would naturally have on the Commonalty.

Neither do I apprehend, my Lord, that the Difficulty of Establishing such a Liturgy, *expressly Scriptural*, as is here wished, is by any means so great as is usually pretended. In so important a step doubtless Precipitation should be avoided ; and Wisdom would adopt the most persuasive measures. Respect is moreover due to Public Opinion. But are these considerations really sufficient to prevent for ever the accomplishment of so salu-

tary a Work?* Did our first *Reformers* run no hazard in the cause of Truth? The advances which they made towards the purification of our Religion were great; and the completion of what they began, is, therefore, comparatively, easy to their descendants. Our present Book of Common Prayer, is filled, in general, with Noble and Exalted forms of Service, and, in order to make them highly satisfactory to all truly Religious men, want only to be purged from those Expressions which are little understood, or, so far as they may be understood, are evidently inconsonant to the general tenor of the Bible, and repugnant to the natural suggestions of our own Consciences.

For instance. In several, though not in all, of our present Forms, (which will, I believe, be matter of no small astonishment to Posterity) we find the Dominion and Government of the Universe ascribed to *Three different divine Persons*, who, it is declared, *Live and Reign together*; and *They* are, accordingly, Glorified and Worshipped by Christians in a *distinct* manner. Surely this (notwithstanding any *qualifying* clause) must appear, to every

“ *At least I should think it would be right to run some risk, and place some trust in the Providence of God; rather than let errors of any consequence remain.*” Dr. Clayton Bishop of Clogher, as quoted by Mr. Lindsey. *Apology*, P. 2.

every common Understanding, plain *Tritheism*, and the great question is, whether such *Worship* be fairly established on the Principles of right Reason, or of *Revelation* ? *

It is, therefore, much to be desired that those who are at all qualified, would search with temper into the grounds of their persuasions and practice; and not suffer themselves to be lulled asleep by the soothing power of Habit; or into an implicit reliance on even learned and worthy men; who, it is very possible, may deceive themselves. For example, *Sabellianism* and *Tritheism* are equally reprobated and anathematized by those who believe themselves *Orthodox*: and yet, if those Gentlemen would attentively investigate their own Principles, they would find, in general, that they unavoidably incline either to *Tritheism* or *Sabellianism*. This circumstance will point out the danger of wavering, in the least, in the Belief of the Divine *Unity* absolutely taken; and will also shew how strong are the motives which should persuade men to Charity and Forbearance with respect to Religious Opinions; lest prejudice should hurry

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* How do the doxologies which end many of the *Prayers* and *Collects*, accord with the Conclusion of our Lord's Prayer, Matt. vi. 13. or with his Thanksgiving, Luke x. 21? In some instances, indeed, the Church Prayers and Collects appear inconsistent with each other. See Note (a) P. 27.

them on to condemn *themselves*, while they are censuring the Principles of others;—not having thoroughly examined the tendency and consequences of their own.

These considerations have had, and, I hope, always will have their proper weight with me. I thank God that my Mind is warm with Charity to all. I am from Experience taught to consider the painful Difficulty of rooting out those Prejudices which have been instilled into us from our Infancy, and cherished, without suspicion, as the indisputable tokens of a true Faith. I greatly rejoice in the certainty, that very large allowances will be made by our most Wise and Merciful Creator, for all our unavoidable Errors. As to Errors which are ascribable to Indolence, or want of due attention in those who have acquired the means and the Power of correcting them; in whatsoever degree *such* may remain among Men, it is certain that the Simple and Illiterate are not directly chargeable therewith. Let Them be answerable for Mine, says the unlettered Husbandman, under whose Conduct I approach the Altar.

WITH all reasonable allowances for the gross Ignorance and Darkness of former Centuries, and the Prejudices they have left upon us; it yet is wonderful and mortifying that, the *proper Object*
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of Religious Worship, should not have been long since irreversibly *Fixed*; and maintained not only by a few, but by all Thinking and Learned Men. Because, not only the general tenour of Revealed Religion, but also *Universal Nature* proclaims the great truth of the *Unity of the Deity*.---The *Similarity* of Construction in the Greater Bodies around us: The “*nice Dependencies*” preserved in all the Lesser:---in a word, the whole visible Creation discovers to human Reason, *One* uniform connected Design throughout: and demonstrates to reflecting Beings, that All Things were formed by *One Mind*: that they are universally the Effects of the *Same great Cause*; and, from their invariable Evolutions, are certainly and constantly under the very same Direction. God has taken care that we should have more reasons than one to believe them to be so; and, I think, He has interwoven the Truth of His *Unity* in our very Nature, if we would attend to its operations; at least He has enabled us to detect the most subtile deviations from that fundamental Article. I shall endeavour to give proof of this by a familiar instance: But I beg leave to introduce it rather as an accessory circumstance, than as a necessary Argument; for after what has been produced in the Elucidation, and by *Others*, such assistances, I conceive, are but little wanted. It may be just observed that, what follows is not merely Speculative, but may

be rather called *Experimental*, and will serve to shew that, from the limited Nature of the human Intellect, the present Doctrines incline us directly to *Polytheism*.

WHENEVER a Multiplicity of Objects are presented to the Mind, we find it necessary, in order to Contemplate with any accuracy, to confine ourselves to *one*, and drop all the rest. A consequence ever unavoidable while the *Thinking Principle* is closely engaged. And hence it arrives that the *Unity* of God forces itself upon us in the Act of Devotion, from the *Indivisibility of Thought*. For we may observe, that, when we address ourselves *intently* in Prayer, we find it impossible to *Fix* our Meditation absolutely, on more than *One* Object of Worship at the same moment. All others are neglected in the instant, and cannot enter the Mind without confusing and dissipating the Attention. This alone plainly shews, that the mental Faculties are not calculated to attend *Fixedly* to more than *One* Object. We may, indeed, *Associate* Three or more different Things or Persons in Idea, and then consider them in One *Collective* view; but this doth not destroy their *Individuality*; and when we would contemplate any one of these Objects with Precision, we must dismiss the Combination. Or we may *Blend* three or more distinct Things or Subjects together in
Idea,

Idea, and then consider them in the Aggregate as *One*; but besides that this is a mere work of the Imagination, it would be held both dissatisfactory and dangerous with respect to the *Trinity*; because we are expressly enjoined, in our present received Doctrines, to preserve the *Distinction* of the *Three Persons*, and acknowledge Them to be not only separate, but also *Equal* Objects of Prayer and Thanksgiving. Notwithstanding this, in the solemn Acts of Devotion, the Mind betrays an *Election* for one or the other: and this Preference, we find, is naturally and generally given to *God Himself*, though every other Object is excluded from the Mind *at the time*. For *He* incessantly arises in the Collected Soul, and Fills it. Thus the Great Truth of the *Unity* of the Deity, seems to have been implanted by Him in our Nature, and the Mind of man, in its most serious and attentive moments, necessarily led to acknowledge it. In Praying to, or Glorifying the Trinity *in their Turns*, we still give the Precedence to the FATHER; but, by a positive Distinction in their *Persons*, and in our *Worship*, we unavoidably destroy the very Notion of *One only God*, and, as I apprehend, overthrow the Great Basis of Revealed Religion.

What will naturally follow from these observations, is this. That as the Indivisibility of Thought will

will not permit us to Pray *Fixedly* to more than *One* Object at the same time; for the very attempt to Divide the Attention confuses it; therefore we are compelled, if we hold to the Athanasian System, to invoke, and Worship the *Three Persons* of the Trinity in a separate manner, as we find is done*. Thus when we Worship the *Father*, we Adore a Person *different* from the Son, or the Holy Ghost: and when we Worship *These*, we adore two Persons both *different* from the *Father* and from each other. For, howsoever They may be connected, Their *Persons* are to be preserved *distinctly* in the Mind, and Their Worship, of course, to be *distinct* also. Now under these circumstances, it appears impossible, from the very Nature of Thought, to free ourselves from the Idea of their being *Three distinct Gods*: For since we cannot Divide our *Attention*, (which if we could would be the highest disrespect to the Person meant to be adored) it must be always *Changed* with the *Object* of our Worship; and then it inevitably follows, that every Other must be Neglected *at the time*; and *these are exactly the Consequences with all Polytheism whatsoever*: from which therefore, I humbly apprehend, it is extremely difficult to Distinguish the present System. But on the other hand, If we Blend the *Three Persons* together,

* In the *Litany*, in many of the Collects, &c.

together, and consider Them as *One* and the *Same* Being; then the Athanasian hypothesis is destroyed, and any *Distinct* or *Discriminating* Worship appears totally Superfluous and Contradictory.

I beg that I may not be misunderstood in making these reflections: They are intended in support of those passages in the *Bible* which render the Worship of God so easy to the Mind, by plainly and positively declaring that He is *One*;^{*} — and are not brought forward from any vain desires of Disputation.

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* Unless the *respective rights* of the *Three Divine Persons* of the (supposed) Trinity, were clearly ascertained in *Revelation*; (which is silent on this head) how should men discharge their *proper Duties* to them; How should *men judge* when, or on what Occasion it would be most just and beneficial to address the one in Prayer or Thanksgiving, and when the others? The serious Mind, anxious to observe the Respect due to *each*, is in dread of giving Offence to one or other by some *Neglect*: And if we address Them all as *One*, then the *Personalities* are lost or confounded. St. James by his assertion that *every good and every perfect Gift cometh from the FATHER*, James i. 17. and St. Paul by instructing us to *give thanks always for all things unto God even the FATHER*, Eph. v. 20; have made this point (on the Athanasian Principle) still more embarrassing. But, indeed, if we drop the Athanasian scheme, and take *our Lord's* clear directions and Example, (Matt. vi. 9. xi. 23. John xi. 41. xvi. 23) or those of his Apostles, then the Mind is relieved, and all Anxiety and Distraction are immediately at an end.

I have never been able to meet with any Exposition of the Athanasian system (as it is called) that seemed at all satisfactory: on the contrary, even the best of those which I have seen, all appear to me, to be intermixed with perpetual and inevitable *Contradictions*:—How is it possible for the most gifted Mind to avoid them, while it is endeavouring, to maintain a System which professes to abhor the Idea of *Three Gods*, and yet confidently asserts *Three All-Perfect and Different Objects of Divine Worship*!

A Learned Writer, of some rank in the Church, has very lately declared, as his Belief, “ that there must be *Differences* in the *Three Persons* of the Trinity, and gradual *Subordination*.” Yet, in the same breath he insists that *They* are strictly *One Being*, the *same God*, and *Equal* in all Perfections. Here we find that, *Difference* and *Identity*, *Subordination* and *Equality*, are made synonymous terms. Is not this illustrating the Athanasian Creed by the Creed of Athanasius? Indeed the terms just mentioned, are hardly so guarded as those of this famous Creed, and while words retain their acknowledged meaning, such modes of Expression are altogether as unintelligible or contradictory as the Edict on which they are founded. The same learned Author has likewise suggested that, “ the *Differences* of the *Three Persons*, can only consist in
Their

"*Their Personal Properties.*" Now if their *Personal Properties* be *Different*, this, indeed, sufficiently declares, a *positive distinction*, and will shew them not to be the *same*, but *Three distinct Beings or Gods*; since a *difference of Properties* is the surest mark of *Distinction* between one Being and another.

Ingenious Men have endeavoured (doubtless often from very upright motives,) to support this incomprehensible Doctrine, by deep comments and laboured Interpretations. Every passage throughout the Bible, that affords the most distant colour of an Argument, has been laid hold of and forced into the Service.* But their efforts hitherto, have not been able to eradicate the Doubts, and heal the Divisions which have unhappily so long prevailed on this essential article of Religion. The searching out mystical meanings

* One of the most plausible and commonly urged, is that found in John xx. 28. where the Apostle Thomas, convinced of the Resurrection of Jesus, cries out, *My Lord and my God*. Probably an *Exclamation* of astonishment and joy; like that which any one would be apt to utter on the sudden Appearance of a much-loved Friend who had been absolutely given up as *Dead*; —My good God! My gracious God! would be natural expressions on such an affecting occasion. But whatever Thomas might have meant, allowance should be made for the violent commotion he must have felt: and we should attend to the context. St. John almost immediately adds;—*these signs are written that ye might believe that Jesus is THE CHRIST, the Son of God*. Observe also ver. 17, to which the usual construction of the words of St. Thomas cannot be reconciled.

ings in Scripture, and deducing far-fetched conclusions from passages that may be somewhat obscure, appears to me to be seeking Darkneſs rather than Light; an endless unprofitable undertaking, making an Enigma of the Bible, and, conſequently, productive of great and dangerous Confuſion; as is plain from the ſtrange and contrary opinions which have ariſen from time to time, from this way of conſtruing the ſacred Writings. Surely it would be better to recede from this precarious unſettled mode of explication, and not give ſuch implicit Faith to Thoſe who think themſelves keen enough to ſee even beyond the Truth itſelf.

WITH reſpect to the Important Point before us, namely, *the Divine Unity*, the true Way is indeed very far from being either Dark or Intricate. We have but this Alternative, *either to abide by the Strongeſt and Cleareſt Evidence, or follow that which is leſs Strong and leſs Clear*. It is hardly conceivable that any rational Being, were he left to himſelf, would hesitate upon which to chuſe. Every ſerious and ſenſible Chriſtian would, above all things, be moſt happy to be Clear in his Religious Creed; as he muſt feel and own that, in general, no ſolid Virtues, no rational Faith, nothing above a Clouded Piety can be expected in Men who Profeſs a Religious System, the fundamental Principles of which, they ingenuouſly confeſs they cannot Underſtand. May not ſuch Men,

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without much presumption, be justly said to *Worship they know not what?* and while they remain in this doubtful and confused state, the influence of Religion on their Minds, must be feeble, wavering, and, in a great measure, fruitless; and this observation we see verified in fact;—too often even among the most distinguished Characters.

Now, my Lord, instead of continuing to insist on those Doctrines, which, if they were at all explicable, are allowed to be beyond the Comprehension of the greater part of Mankind, and, of course, conduce little to Edification;—Suppose we were to go back to the Simplicity of the Gospel? To that humble, unassuming *Practice*, which was held sacred by Christians in the *earliest* ages,* and derived *immediately* from the purest source of Instruction:—Suppose, instead of destroying His Supremacy as far as in us lies, we were to Adore the *One God and Father of All*; to *Worship Him and Pray to him alone, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ?* Wherein should we Err? Pardon me, my Lord, a moment, while I ask whether our Ecclesiastic Governors will allow this to be strictly consonant to the Sacred Precepts or not? They surely cannot deny it. But Where, then, do we find so *clear* and so *respectable* Authority for the
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* In the *first* and *best* ages, the churches of Christ directed all their prayers, according to the Scriptures, to God only, through the alone Mediation of Jesus Christ. *Bishop Bull*. See Mr. Lindsey's *Apology*. P. 148, 149.

Worship of a *Trinity*? Neither, it seems, is this word, nor *this Worship* to be found in our *Bibles*, Notwithstanding the ingenious Zeal of later Ages, Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, appear to have been wholly Strangers to so Complicated a System. Why, therefore, do we refuse ourselves the beneficial Happiness of giving HIM (to Whom we remain Indebted for *every Blessing*, even for *Christ himself*.) the peculiar Honour due unto His Glorious Name, Who is the one Everlasting God and Benevolent Parent of the Universe? Hath not Christ and his Apostles, the holy Prophets of God, nay, even *God Himself*, plainly taught and encouraged us to do this? Let the World impartially examine the Sacred Volume, collect the Evidence, and say whether this Injunction be *Reiterated* or not. If it be, with what confusion shall we shortly appear before His Face, with the Bible, perhaps our own Consciences, and even the whole surrounding Creation Witnesses against us! If indeed, we have not erred Willfully, or through Negligence, our Pardon is certain: but our Confusion and Regret may very possibly remain with us.

AFTER all, it must be confessed that, such endeavours

* THOU, even Thou art LORD alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein, and Thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth Thee! Neh. ix. 6, &c.

endeavours as these, to mark the plainest defects and incongruities of the present System, and to persuade a Reformation of them, will, in a great measure, be vain and ineffectual, while some are still determined to support the most manifest deviations at all Events, and others are so little inclined to attend to what is said against them. Even the greater number of Those to whom the care of our holy Religion is more immediately consigned, will not condescend to look into the Publications that are offered to their perusal, and which, at least in many instances, in the most disinterested manner, point out the stumbling-blocks which lay in their own way, and evidently Obstruct the most pious endeavours to fix the Religion of Christ in the hearts of Men.

In such a situation of things, all that can be done by those who have the Honour of our *Heavenly Father*, the *Gospel of Christ*, and their own Peace and Salvation truly at Heart, is, to declare openly, wherein they humbly apprehend, Men have departed from *the Faith that was once delivered unto the Saints* : and far from invidiously attacking the tenets of others, and at the same time concealing their own, lest they also should be found equally defective ;—The honest Professors of Christianity, putting away all bitterness of spirit, should deliver to the World their own Principles with humility, but with firmness and sincerity ;—freely offer them to the severest Scrutiny

of rational Inquirers, and leave their merits and their Truth to be decided by the sacred Oracles of God. I shall therefore deliver, what I conceive to be, the Religious Principles of an *Unitarian Christian*.

ZEALOUS to walk in a plain and well-enlightened Path, the Unitarian Christian, in contradiction to all the complex Systems of Human invention, maintains, that the All-Glorious God of the Universe, is simply, and absolutely ONE* That there is no God (in the proper sense of the term) WITH HIM,† nor LIKE HIM,‡ nor EQUAL to HIM:§ and consequently, that *He* alone is the True God; that *He* alone is the Great Object of all Religious Adoration§. And it is further maintained, that it is altogether impossible, that the Prophets and Apostles, speaking as they did by divine Inspiration, could have asserted the *Unity* of God so Clearly and Positively as they have done, unless it were *strictly* true; and incapable of any dangerous or Erroneous consequences

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* Deut. vi. 4. Mark xii. 29. 1 Cor. viii, 4. 6. &c.

† Deut. xxxii. 39.

‡ Isa. xlv. 9.

§ Isa. xl. 25. xlv. 5.

§ Exod. xxxiv. 14. Matt. vi. 6. 9. &c.

ees whatsoever, when *directly* adopted by Mankind as a Principle most Sacred and Inviolable. *

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* With respect to the *Holy Spirit*, I beg leave to observe, that whenever the FATHER is Worshipped, the holy Spirit is included in *Him*, i. e. not adored as a *distinct* Being; since to make the holy Spirit a *distinct Person* from the *Father*, is, I humbly apprehend, to make a *Distinction* without a real *Difference*. For the *holy Spirit*, from the general import of the sacred writings, is the Spirit of God, His *Divine Influence*, (a) or *God Himself*, who is indeed THE GREAT AND UNIVERSAL SPIRIT. And thus this point must have been considered by Christ and his Apostles; otherwise, in order to prevent Error or Neglect, They would have certainly made a positive *Distinction* in *Their forms of Worship and Glorification*, between the *Holy Ghost* and the *Father*, If *different and Equal Persons* were meant. But no such *distinct Worship* is to be found in the *Scriptures*. (This alone discovers that, the Trinitarian Worship, as it is now practised, is an *Innovation* upon the sacred Doctrines.) There are some, indeed, who, struck with this circumstance, think, nevertheless, that, by the *Holy Spirit* may be meant a *distinct and Subordinate Agent*, tho' not an *Object of Divine Worship*. This notion, standing thus, may have no improper consequences: But the above opinion, it is humbly conceived, appears more consonant to the *general tenour* of holy Writ. And it seems a very unsatisfactory Expedient to single out a few (perhaps doubtful) passages, and oppose them to the great Body of the *Scriptures*.

(a) And seems to be sometimes Prayed for, as such, ('ho' with no great appearance of *Consistency*) in the *Church Established*. Among other instances; see form of Absolution, Collects for Quinquagesima Sunday, 5th Sunday after Easter, 19th Sunday after Trinity, St. Barnabas, Prayers for the King, and Royal Family, that, at the entrance of the Communion, &c. These Addressers, with many others, are absolutely *Unitarian*; they are made to God the Father *only*, through Jesus Christ, and the *Holy Ghost* (or *holy Spirit*) is prayed for, as a divine *Gift* of spiritual Graces.

The Son of God is deeply Reverenced by the Unitarian Christian, as his Mediator, High Priest, and great Deliverer: Commissioned by the FATHER to lead Men into the knowledge of Him, *the Only true God*, and into the way of Life Eternal. John xvii. 3. That, accordingly, the Doctrines and Precepts of our Saviour and his Apostles, are to be esteemed as the unalterable Rules of the Christian's Life; to be strictly adhered to, and punctually obeyed; to be fixed in his Heart, and uniformly manifested in his Actions. That not Obedience only, but also Love, Gratitude, Honour and Veneration, are due to Christ in a very high degree from all Mankind. And lastly, that, as his Disciples, we are authorized and encouraged to make use of his *Name* on all occasions in our Worship of ALMIGHTY GOD; to whose Divine Majesty we thus approach by our blessed Mediator.

It is upon this solid Basis that the Unitarian Christian rests his Hope: Worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth, and rejoicing in Christ Jesus. For *to us there is but One God, THE FATHER, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.* 1 Cor. viii. 6.* The simplicity of the

* St. Paul is here *professedly* Distinguishing *the True God*. see Ver. 4, 5, 6. Notwithstanding this, some men, unable to subvert the force and accuracy of the Apostle's Expression, boldly assert

the foregoing Creed enables it to be clearly understood by all Men ; and the Records on which it is directly founded, will probably incline those who believe in Revelation, to think that it contains a glorious Truth.

But if there be any thing materially wrong in it, or absurd, or contrary to the plain Doctrines of the Gospel ; in the Name of God, let it be pointed out : for no man in his senses, I think, would Err in his Religion if he could possibly avoid it. I am sure, my Lord, that if I (who am most willing to learn) could have been by any assistance satisfied, that the *Worship* of a *Trinity* is as plainly commanded, or exemplified in *Scripture*, as is the *Worship* of the *One God and Father of All* ; I should have been saved from an anxiety of Mind which I am unable to express.

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assert that the term *Father*, here signifies *all the Three Persons* of the *Trinity*. (Altho' *the Father* is pointedly distinguished in this very passage, from *Christ* and all other Beings whatever.) Thus "the *discriminative* appellation of an Individual," or a Name *purposely* adopted for *distinction*, is made to infer *no real Distinction at all* ; and men have no way left them to express their true meaning : The *Father* signifies the *Son*, and the *Son* the *Father*, &c. (*Sabellianism*.) Those who can persuade themselves to talk thus, absolutely confound the fundamental Principles of language, and set all rational Argument at defiance.

The Apostle, indeed, makes no mention here of the *holy Ghost*, which it is *more* than probable he would have done, on so interesting and decisive an occasion, if by the *holy Spirit* were meant a *Person*, Different from the *Father*, and His Equal.

Am I, or is any Man blameable for such anxiety? is it Weakness? An Indifference to RELIGION and its Truths, is Destruction in every sense of the word: It is the real Source of all the Moral Corruptions that infest the Human Race. This Indifference to Religion (if it does not proceed from the most thoughtless Stupidity) must arise from a disbelief of its *Principles*; or from a Persuasion that whether its *Precepts* are obeyed or not, it will be of equal Consequence to us. It is enough, I hope, to observe to the most negligent Reader, that this last opinion leads directly to *Atheism*, and at once destroys the very notion of an Omniscient and Just Governor of the Universe. As to a disbelief of the leading Principles of any particular System, it behoves the virtuous among Men to shew, if it be possible, that such Incredulity has no Rational foundation. Every method should be tried, every fair Argument brought forward, to remove Impediments that may render the paths of Religion clouded or intricate, which above all things, it is to be wished, should be most clear.

CHRISTIANITY in its natural and most amiable Form, presents nothing to the Mind of man that is gloomy or contradictory: It utters nothing but Peace and Comfort to the Soul: and will be found to agree with Reason in all her genuine Principles. The Light of the Gospel of Christ
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kindly blends itself with the Light of Reason and increases its Lustre; and, whatever Divines may have formerly held, it is this Union that gives solid satisfaction to the human Heart.

I am not allowed to hope from the aspect of the present day, that I shall live to see any material Reformation in our forms of Worship. But of this, I am confident, that such a Reform will in future take place*. I apprehend that the Truth of the Sacred Writings is directly engaged in this Issue. Until the Gospel is preached in its original Purity, the Nations of the Earth, we see, are not likely to become the Kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ. And yet, so sure as the Bible is true, this great Event must arrive, and the Prophecies be Fulfilled. Happy indeed! will They be, who shall become the blessed Instruments of accomplishing them;—By calling back the Christian Faith to its primeval Purity and Simplicity; and clearing it entirely from that heavy Cloud of

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* How can we possibly think that, the charitable and merciful Spirit of pure Christianity, is properly retained in a Church, wherein we hear *Everlasting perdition* solemnly denounced, without any exception or qualification, against all those who do not, (perhaps cannot) Believe exactly as *She* dictates? or rather, as some of the most violent Zealots were pleased to dictate in the darkest Ages. Surely *that Wisdom descends not from Above*, which first confounds the Understanding, and then leaves the most dreadful Curse on the very Doubts *itself* has raised!—Yet this seems to be the Wisdom, and this the Mercy which we find in a certain Creed,

Superstition and Error which has inwrapped it for Ages ! A Departure from the Truth was plainly foretold ; and although *the Sun of Righteousness* has happily arisen with brighter Rays on our Land, our Impurities are not yet exhaled ; Their remains are conspicuous, and mark the force and truth of the Prophecy.

The confining ourselves within the narrow Pale of our Forefathers, betrays an inexcusable Indolence, and a manifest lukewarmness for the *further* propagation of the Gospel. It may be considered as a certain Fact, that the Wise and Benevolent Author of Nature, plainly intends, (notwithstanding some partial exceptions) that the Rational part of his Creation shall not ultimately Decline ; shall not become less enlightened ; more ignorant and depraved ; but shall assuredly move forward, by gradual steps, in the paths of useful Knowledge and Improvement. If this be granted, how contradictory to these gracious designs doth it appear, that we should implicitly rely on our remote Ancestors for our present Opinions and Practice, and by obstinately or supinely continuing on the same ground, contract all our Ideas within the circle of their Knowledge ?

I believe, however, that this last is far from being now the prevailing Inclination. The necessary Distinction between sound Faith and thoughtless

less Credulity, is no longer *Heretical*. I greatly rejoice when I reflect, that no inconsiderable number of our most respectable Clergy, not only conceive themselves to be bound in their Profession, by some very hard and illiberal Engagements of human construction, but, many of them, are also sensible, that some further Amendments in our doxologies, and Forms of Worship, are become absolutely necessary: They justly think, that these may be rendered more generally unexceptionable and safe, *By reducing them to a more direct congruity with those of the Scriptures*. Were this measure strictly adopted, it must prevent all controversy and uneasiness, on the point in question, (at least among the reasonable part of Mankind) so long as our holy Records are considered as the incontestable Rules of our Faith. It would be most Injurious to suppose, that those Reverend Gentlemen who are zealous for so desirable a Reform, have not the welfare of Christianity as much at Heart as their Opposers. Their wishes can proceed from nothing but a watchful and conscientious attention to Religion, and a sincere love of it; with a conviction of its infinite Importance to the World when rightly understood: and they well discern, that if such a step were taken, it would at once free the *Whole* from a weight of anxiety and vexation, which every honest Man would be happy to see them fairly rid of.

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MY LORD, If what has been said should, upon the whole, appear worthy of any regard; The exalted Station in which Divine Providence hath been pleased to place your Grace, enables you to direct the means of such Relief in these most Important matters, as your Wisdom shall suggest. Your Lordship is undoubtedly well acquainted, that, The Public attention is powerfully attracted towards the present Inquiry into the *True Object* of Religious Worship; a Subject surely the most Interesting that can engage the human Mind.—That the Inquirers into this momentous Article, are numerous and respectable—That the Foundations of our Faith are not now assailed by the shallow and contemptible disquisitions of Atheists and Libertines; but are searched into by Men whose Characters are unimpeachable, whose Abilities, and Zeal in support of Christianity, are equally ardent and conspicuous, and who assuredly have their own inward quiet, and salvation at heart, (of which some of them have given the most unquestionable proofs) tho' the World may not have candour enough to allow that their endeavours reach further than to themselves. Whatever may be the Event of these Inquiries, this is certain, that they never could have arisen among such Men, if the *received* Doctrines had been clearly founded on the Scriptures and sound Reason.

“ Let

" Let us, therefore, be intent on studying the
 " pure word of God ; and careful to interpret it
 " in such a manner, as may do most honour to its
 " author ; and at all times encourage a free and
 " an impartial study of it. 'Tis now high time
 " to do this, and to awake out of sleep, since
 " our Reformation is much nearer than when we
 " first believed : and it is to be wished, that we
 " ourselves could be persuaded to examine our
 " own state ;—that we were disposed to help and
 " forward, rather than check the progress of
 " every serious inquiry ; and stop any farther im-
 " provements in the knowledge of that, which of
 " all things deserves, and wants them most ; ra-
 " ther than withstand a general reformation in
 " Religion, by rigorously insisting on, and ob-
 " truding such things for doctrine, as are the
 " commandments of men, and very foreign to
 " the essence of it ; instead of either entertaining
 " that Antichristian kind of spirit, which calls
 " down fire from heaven on all who don't re-
 " ceive us ; which delights in straitening the way
 " that leads to Life, and shutting up the king-
 " dom of heaven against men ; or else incurring
 " the woe denounced against those hypocrites, who
 " are desirous of lading men with heavy burthens,
 " and binding upon them things which are too
 " grievous to be borne ; and which they know,
 " that none need touch with one of their fingers.

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“ As we see the faults and follies of past ages,
 “ a double woe will be to us, if, instead of taking
 “ warning by them, and avoiding the like; we are
 “ resolved to tread the same steps, and fill up the
 “ measure of our fathers *.”

If then, your Lordship should, happily, be inclined to forward any proper measures for the further purifying our forms of Worship, in doing which, without doubt, the Christian Scriptures would be taken as the directive Lights: It is then that the true Disciples of Christ *would rejoice with exceeding great Joy*: since such an Amendment could have no other end, than the ensuring the most durable Happiness to Mankind; by giving birth to that substantial Piety, wherein the Heart and the Understanding also sincerely Unite. And I am, with many others, grossly deceived, if the EPOCHÆ would not be as glorious for *your Grace*, through all Posterity, as it would be highly advantageous to Christianity. To take away the complicated Veil which has been thrown over the Gospel, and offer it, as it were, anew to Mankind, in all its genuine Beauty and Perspicuity; divested of the fallacious supports
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* Bishop of Carlisle's Considerations on the Theory of Religion, &c. Page 190, 5th Edition.

of human device, of delusive Obligations,* and Learned Subtilty:—this is *the mark we press toward*; (Philippians iii. 14.) with a steady but peaceable Spirit:—to that pure and all-diffusive Light, which, unobscured by earthly system, would *enlighten every man that cometh into the world*. “The more simple and unexceptionable a Religion is, the dearer will it be to those who understand it, and know what it is to enjoy it.” In the recovery of “such a Religion,” my Lord, “Charity would be a gainer, and Faith would be no loser, and it would be an easier task to satisfy Doubters, to bring over Infidels, and to re-unite Believers.”† You would not want the ready assistance of many among the most Valuable and Learned of your Clergy, and you have this Peculiar advantage, that it would be impossible to charge your Grace, in such an important undertaking, with any Sinister views or Worldly motives whatsoever. May the same Almighty Being who hath called you into your Eminent State in the Church, inspire you to do that which is right in His sight,
and

* “Men will *compel* others, not, to think with them, for that is impossible; but to say they do, upon which they obtain full leave, not to think or reason at all, and this is called *Unity*.” Dr. Jortin’s *Rem. on Eccle. Hist. Pref.* P. xxii. Ed. 1751.

† Ib. P. xxxv.

and enable you to lead your extensive Flock in the true Paths of Righteousness and Peace.

I conclude this Letter with an earnest Prayer. That the God of Truth may condescend to guide and support All those who are labouring in its Cause. That CHRISTIANITY may flourish in its utmost Extent. That Mankind may enjoy all those permanent Blessings, which may be expected from a steady Obedience to its *Divine Precepts*. And, especially, that we may never fail in our deepest Gratitude to HIM, from Whom those Precepts were truly Derived*; nor in our sincerest Love to that benevolent Being who Delivered them. Now, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to HIM who is the FATHER of Mercies and the God of all Comfort, Be Glory, Adoration and Gratitude in the Highest, to all Eternity. Amen.

I am, my Lord,

With the greatest Respect,

Your Grace's very Humble

And most Obedient Servant,

Jan. 27,
1785.

JAMES GIFFORD.

* John vii. 16. xii. 49, 50. xiv, 24.